

Architectural Survey of  
**Northfield  
Township**  
Washtenaw County



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Consulting, LLC

September 2021



*Front page images:*

*Top Left: Zuck House (9301 Main Street)*

*Bottom Left: Italianate detailing at Kalmbach Farm (385 West Joy Road)*

*Top Middle: Greek Revival detailing at Devereaux Farm (66425 West Eight Mile Road)*

*Middle: Kearney Monument at St. Patrick Catholic Church Cemetery (5731 Whitmore Lake Road)*

*Bottom Middle: Dairy Barn at Arthur Zeeb Farm (5380 Earhart Road)*

*Top Right: Agricultural Outbuildings at Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road)*

*Middle Right: Holstein Cows at Kapp Farm (2271 East Joy Road)*

*Bottom Right: Smokehouse at Kennedy Farm (6905 Sutton Road)*

architectural survey of  
**Northfield Township**  
Washtenaw County

**Volume 1: Survey Report**

Prepared for

Northfield Township Historical Society  
Washtenaw County Community & Economic Development  
Michigan State Historic Preservation Office

Prepared by

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(unless otherwise noted)

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# Executive Summary

In 2019, Washtenaw County, a county-wide Certified Local Government (CLG), received a Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant from the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (MI SHPO) on behalf of the Northfield Township Historical Society (NTHS), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Washtenaw County contracted with Firefly Preservation Consulting, LLC, a qualified historic preservation consulting firm, to undertake a reconnaissance-level architectural survey of resources within the township boundary. Northfield Township includes 36.7 square miles (23,488 acres/9505 hectares) in northeastern Washtenaw County, which is located in the southeastern region of Michigan.

This project was based on the findings of a 2016-2017 township-wide windshield survey conducted by Ina Hanel-Gerdenich and sponsored by NTHS. The survey identified 1,332 historic resources throughout the township and collected basic data including location, construction dates (if known), ownership history (if known), outbuildings (if present), and the form, style, and materials for each resource. A representative selection of resources were also photographed. Resources were categorized into the following six Levels of Significance: Level 1 – high level of potential historic significance; Level 2 – probable historic significance; Level 3 – possible historic significance; Level 4 – very likely no historic significance; Level 5 – supplemental significance; and Level 6 – property not evaluated.

The resources identified as Level 1 significance during the windshield survey form the basis of the 2020-2021 reconnaissance survey. Two Level 1 resources have been lost since the 2016-2017 windshield survey: the Podewils-Worrell farmhouse at 1531 East Northfield Church Road and the Dye-Walker farmhouse at 820 West Joy Road. One Level 1 resource, 2730 East North Territorial Road, was not surveyed during the current project because the owner declined access to the property. One new resource, the Macoska House at 8135 Kearney Road, was added to the project due to architectural significance. Two new resources were added to the project due to community importance: the Matthews Family Cemetery at 4611 East Joy Road and the former Fire Department Station at 75 Barker Road. A total of fifty-eight resources were surveyed during the project.

The project had two primary objectives. The first objective was to document each of the fifty-eight resources at the reconnaissance level with digital photographs, field sketches, basic historical research, a thorough architectural description, a statement of significance, and an assessment of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. This inventory begins on page 115. The second objective was to develop historic contexts for Northfield Township's architectural resources. This included identifying relevant historical themes, which may be found beginning on page 21, as well as preparing project findings, including identifying building types and preparing lists of associated properties within each type; assessing applicable standards for National Register of Historic Places eligibility and making recommendations for properties that may be eligible; identifying preservation threats in the study area; and making recommendations based on these findings, which may be found beginning on page 87.

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# Project Objectives and Methodology

Northfield Township is located in northeastern Washtenaw County, in the southeastern region of Michigan. Northfield Township is a largely rural township, with the exception of the village of Whitmore Lake, which served as a vacation destination and resort community for much of its history.<sup>1</sup> In 2016-2017, the Northfield Township Historical Society (NTHS) sponsored a windshield survey of historic resources in Northfield Township. This survey recorded 1,332 resources with digital photographs, location data, construction dates, architectural styles, property types, and outbuildings. The survey included farmsteads, homes, vacation cottages, commercial buildings, churches, schools, cemeteries, and parks. Resources were categorized into the following six Levels of Significance: Level 1 – high level of potential historic significance; Level 2 – probable historic significance; Level 3 – possible historic significance; Level 4 – very likely no historic significance; Level 5 – supplemental significance; and Level 6 – property not evaluated. Representative properties were also photographed, although not every resource identified during the survey was photographed. The survey revealed the rich settlement, agricultural, and tourism history of the township, although narrative historic contexts were not developed as part of the project.

To continue this work, NTHS partnered with Washtenaw County to secure grant funding, and in 2019, Washtenaw County, a county-wide Certified Local Government (CLG), received a Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant from the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (MI SHPO). The purpose of this grant was to fund a qualified historical consultant to survey a portion of the resources identified during the 2016-2017 survey and to develop narrative historic contexts for the township. Firefly Preservation Consulting, LLC, was selected to undertake this project.

NTHS and Washtenaw County identified two primary objectives for the project. The first objective was to document the resources categorized as Level 1 significance during the 2016-2017 windshield survey. These resources were surveyed at the reconnaissance level with digital photographs, field sketches, basic historical research, a thorough architectural description, a statement of significance, and an assessment of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. The second objective was to develop historic contexts for Northfield Township's architectural resources. This included identifying relevant historical themes, identifying associated building types, preparing an inventory list of associated properties for each property type, and assessing applicable standards for National Register of Historic Places eligibility.

The project planning phase began in December 2019 with a planning meeting between NTHS board members, Washtenaw County staff, MI SHPO staff, and Firefly Preservation Consulting. A research visit at the MI SHPO office was also conducted, during which the available files for resources in Northfield Township were reviewed. The MI SHPO holds National Register files for the Nathan B. Devereaux Octagon House at 66425 Eight Mile Road, listed in 2003, and St. Patrick's Parish Complex at 5671 Whitmore Lake Road, listed in 1982, as well as preliminary questionnaire files for the house at 1879 Shady Beach Drive, the Nathan Sutton House at 5145 Pontiac Trail, and the former Whitmore Lake Post Office at 9419 Main Street.

In February 2020, NTHS hosted a community meeting at the Northfield Township Community Center in Whitmore Lake. During the meeting, Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski from Firefly Preservation Consulting, LLC, delivered a presentation about the project and what property owners should expect during field survey. Property owners and community members were also invited to share historical

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<sup>1</sup> Whitmore Lake refers both to the unincorporated community and the lake itself. Therefore, to maintain clarity for the purposes of this report, the lake is referred to as Whitmore Lake and the unincorporated community is referred to as the village of Whitmore Lake.

documents and photographs of their homes, farms, businesses, and the community, and several property owners shared this material during the meeting. Property owners and community members provided materials for eleven resources, including ownership abstracts, family and church histories, plat maps, floor plans, newspaper clippings, and historic photographs of family members, farm landscapes, and local buildings. Property owners could also request to be notified of upcoming site visits, request to be contacted to share historical information or photographs, or request copies of survey products relating directly to their property.

Historic research took place in March 2020. The Northfield Township Area Library in Whitmore Lake holds a number of primary and secondary source materials about local history in its Michigan and Reference collections, including church histories, plat maps, family maps, and county and township histories. The Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor holds the Northfield Township Historical Society collection, which contains substantial local history information and historical photographs; population and agricultural census records; county directories and farm plat maps; soil maps, school maps, and other historic maps; and local history materials. The Michigan History Center Archives in Lansing holds the records of the Michigan Centennial Farms program, which includes genealogical data, property ownership information, and historical photographs for the nine certified Centennial Farms within the project area.

The survey phase of the project began in March 2020 with a preliminary survey to confirm the locations of the properties to be surveyed at the reconnaissance level, to identify additional properties recommended for survey during this project, and to familiarize the consultant with architectural patterns across the township. Two Level 1 resources have been lost since the 2016-2017 windshield survey. The Podewils-Worrell farmhouse at 1531 East Northfield Church Road was burned in a fire department training exercise in 2020 and the remains of the house have been removed from the site, although a dairy barn associated with the farm remains extant. The interior of the Dye-Walker farmhouse at 820 West Joy Road was partially collapsed at the time of the windshield survey and the remains of the building, as well as a barn and shed, were removed from the site in 2017. One Level 1 resource, 2730 East North Territorial Road, was not surveyed during the current project because the owner declined access to the property. Three resources not identified as Level 1 significance during the windshield survey were added to the project due to architectural significance or community interest. The Macoska House at 8135 Kearney Road was added even though it has not reached fifty years of age because it is the only example of Usonian-inspired architecture in the township and an unusual rural example of this architecture in Washtenaw County. The Matthews Family Cemetery at 4611 East Joy Road, which was not included in the windshield survey, was added due to community interest in the ongoing maintenance and preservation of the site, and as the most intact family cemetery in the township. The former Fire Department Station at 75 Barker Road, which is categorized Level 3 in the windshield survey, was added due to community interest in the history and preservation of this building, which faces an uncertain future and threat of demolition. In addition, properties that include a primary resource with additional primary and/or secondary resources that are historically associated with one another, such as a farmstead comprising of a primary residence, a secondary residence, and a number of agricultural outbuildings, are considered a single resource for the purposes of this project, even if the buildings are located on more than one tax parcel or have been assigned more than one 911 address. Using this methodology, a total of fifty-eight resources were surveyed during this project.

The 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic impacted several aspects of the project, including the site visits for the reconnaissance-level survey. Field work was scheduled to take place in spring 2020 but was delayed due to the initial COVID-19 outbreak. Field work resumed in November of 2020 but again was postponed due to health and safety concerns. Field work again resumed in March 2021 and was completed in May of 2021. During this time, the fifty-eight resources identified during the planning

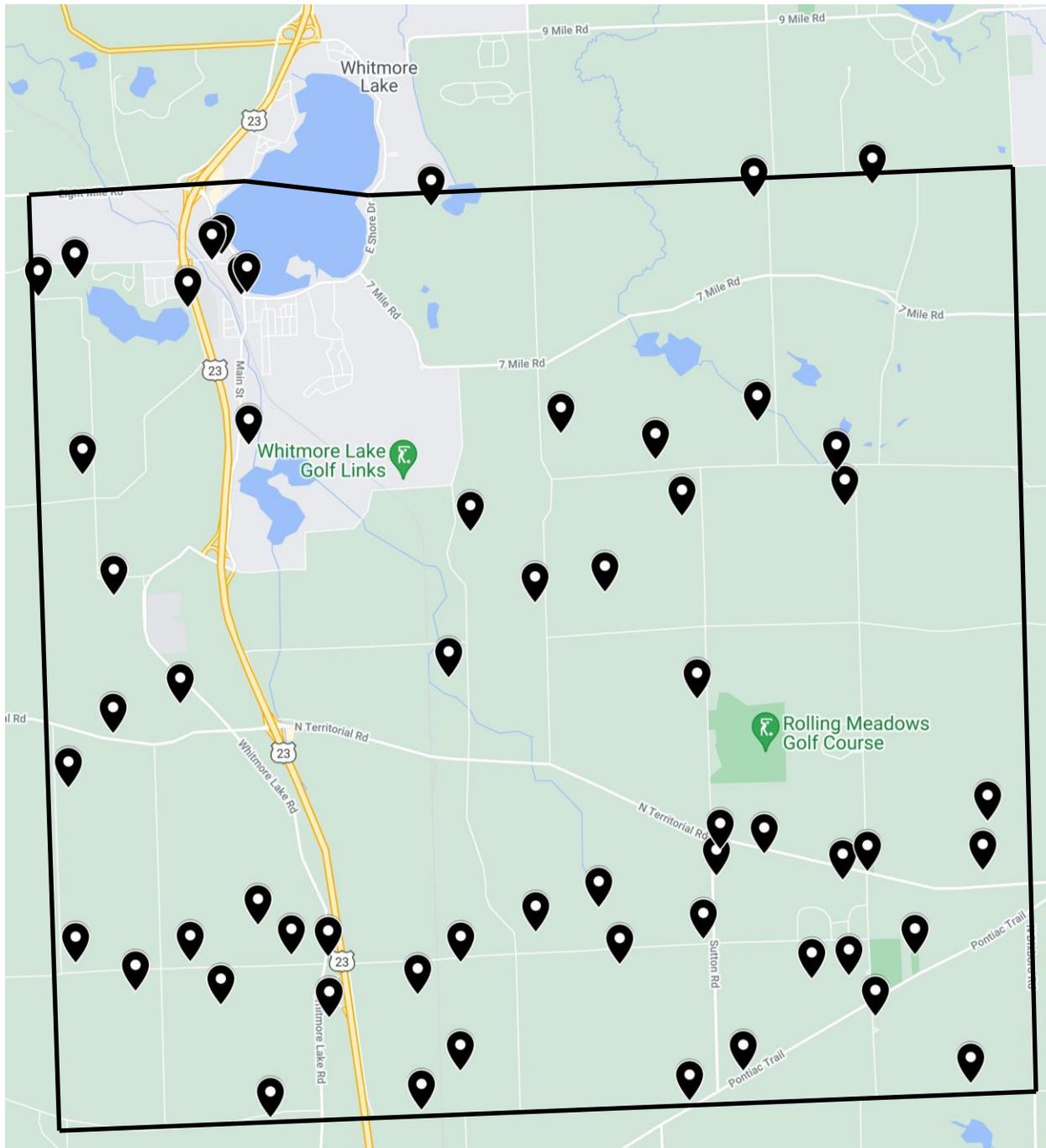
phases and windshield survey were surveyed at the reconnaissance level. The majority of the properties surveyed were farm complexes and rural residential buildings dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A small number of number of churches, schools, village residential buildings, recreational sites, and cemeteries from this period were also documented.

The project initially included oral history interviews with community members and property owners, however, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, they could not be completed as planned. Instead, oral history information was gathered informally during site visits, and when possible, property owners were interviewed about the history and architecture of that specific resource. The content of these interviews, along with additional interviews conducted with knowledgeable long-time residents of the township, also included information about changes to the built environment, prominent families, community institutions, agricultural activities, and threats to historic preservation in the township.

The project concluded with a community meeting hosted by NTHS in September 2021, during which Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski of Firefly Preservation Consulting, LLC, presented the findings of the project, including resources that should be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, local planning recommendations, and suggestions for future projects.

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# Map of Project Study Area



*Image 1: Map of Northfield Township  
Each of the fifty-eight resources in the survey area is denoted with black location marker.  
(Map by Cheri Szcodronski, Google Maps base map)*

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# Historic Context

## Introduction

Northfield Township is located in northeastern Washtenaw County, sharing its northern boundary with Livingston County. Washtenaw County is a rectangular-shaped county encompassing about 720 square miles, and it is located approximately forty miles west of Detroit and approximately fifty miles southeast of Lansing. Although the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Saline, Chelsea, Milan, and Dexter, as well as the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University, are all located within the county, Northfield Township is largely rural. The unincorporated community of Whitmore Lake is located in the northwestern section of the township, with the lake itself covering 677 acres and lying across the Washtenaw-Livingston county line. The 2018 population of Northfield Township was approximately 8,700 people, including 6,770 people living in Whitmore Lake at that time.

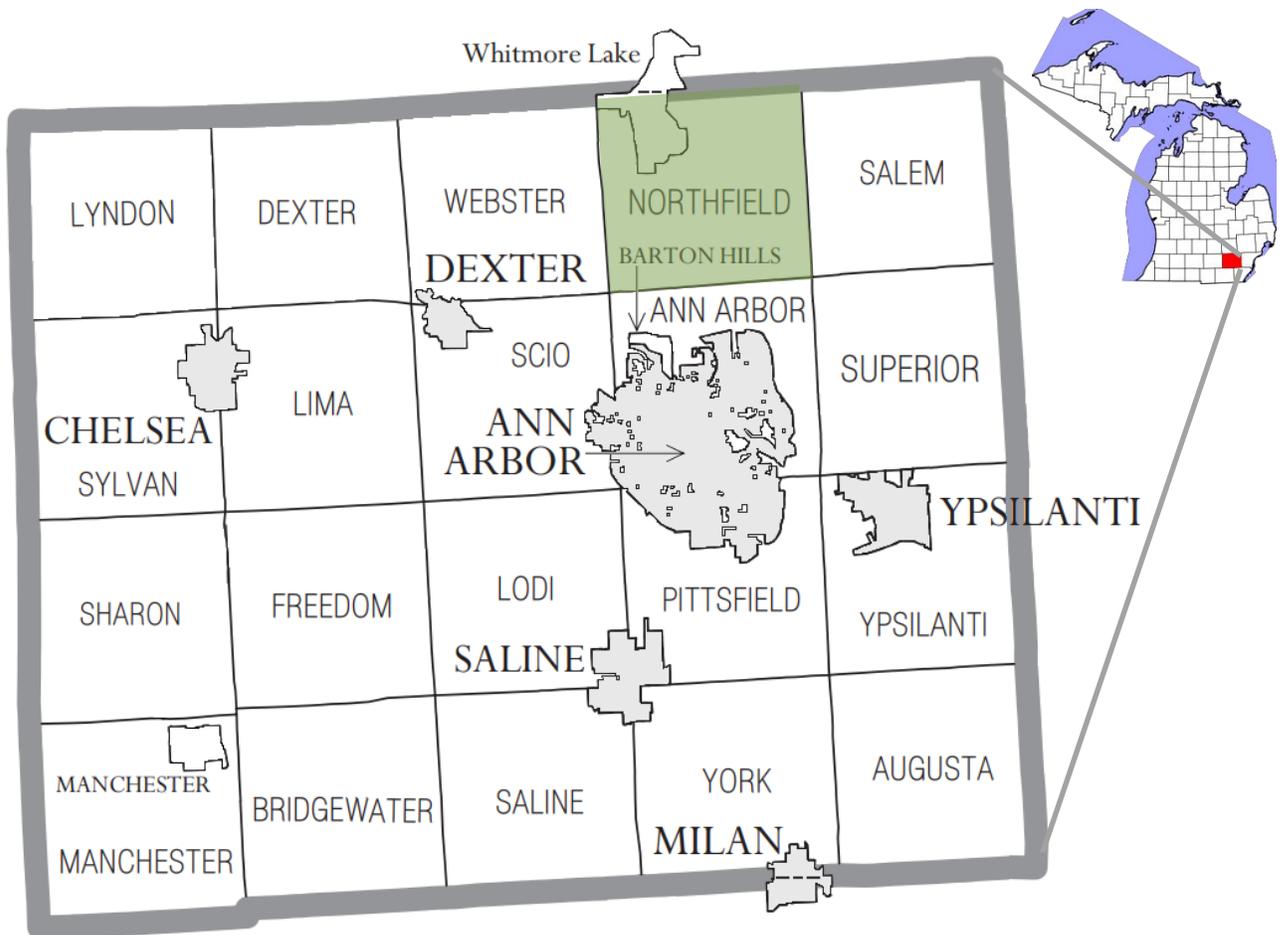


Image 2: Map of Washtenaw County  
["Washtenaw County, Michigan," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washtenaw\\_County,\\_Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washtenaw_County,_Michigan)  
(accessed February 2021). Shading added by author.]

## Geologic and Ecological History

The landscape as it appears today was created fifteen thousand years ago by glaciers extending southwest from Canada across what is now the Great Lakes region. As the glaciers receded, kettle lakes were formed when chunks of ice became buried under sediment pushed along by the glacier. When the ice melted, the sediment collapsed to form a basin, which then filled with glacial melt, runoff, and rain or snow to create a lake. Whitmore Lake in northern Northfield Township was formed in this way, and is currently sustained by rainfall, snowmelt, and an underground aquifer. Sand, clay, and rocks carried along with the ice were deposited as the ice melted to form rolling hills or dunes, known as moraines, on the eastern shore of Whitmore Lake. The soils left behind as the glaciers retreated were rich in sand, silt, and clay – ideal for agriculture – and a sandy agricultural plain extends south of Whitmore Lake.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to Whitmore Lake, there are five other substantial lakes in the township, all in the northern half, and all kettle lakes formed by glaciers. At 677 acres, Whitmore Lake is the largest lake in Northfield Township. The average depth is only ten feet, however three deep kettle holes include the southwestern corner at thirty-five feet deep, the north shore at forty-five feet deep, and the northeast corner at sixty-nine feet deep. This lake has always been the most popular in the county for boating and fishing, with bluegill the most commonly caught fish species. The lake is divided nearly in half by the county line, with the southern half situated in Washtenaw County and the northern half lying in Livingston County.<sup>3</sup> The lake was named for Judge Oliver Whitmore, who accompanied surveyor Jonathan F. Stratton to the area in the 1820s.<sup>4</sup>

Horseshoe Lake is south of Whitmore Lake and covers eighty-five acres with a thirty-foot average depth. Greatly impacted by runoff from the surrounding agricultural fields, aquatic plants are abundant in Horseshoe Lake, making this lake less desirable for fishing, boating, or swimming than Whitmore Lake. Wildwood Lake, in the northeast corner of the township, is surrounded by large areas of swampland, making its borders somewhat difficult to define. Originally known as Dead Lake, although the reason for this name is not clear, its deepest point is thirty-two feet. Tobin Lake, near the center of the northern part of the township, encompasses about one hundred fifty acres with a twenty-seven foot average depth. It was originally known as Jack Lake, named for a horse that escaped his owner and was rescued from a small island in the middle of the lake. Lawton Lake, which is just east of Whitmore Lake and lies partly in Livingston County, is only eighteen acres but as deep as eighty feet. This lake too is surrounded by swampland and was therefore originally called Mud Lake. Van Atta Lake is a small lake of about five acres in the northeastern section of the township. It was named for the original settler on its banks, then renamed Peter Hill Lake when the land was sold. Several smaller lakes and ponds are also located in Northfield Township, most of which are in the northwestern section, and many of which are located on private property.<sup>5</sup>

There are also four substantial rivers in Washtenaw County, although none in Northfield Township. The Huron River flows southwest from its headwaters in Oakland County into Washtenaw County at Portage

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Bordin, *Washtenaw County: An Illustrated History* (Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), 11; Wystan Stevens, ed. *Northfield Harvest: A Pictorial History of Northfield Township and the Whitmore Lake Area* (Whitmore Lake, MI: Northfield Township Historical Society, 1999), 27-28; Thomas P. Hennings, *Looking Back: The History of Northfield Township and the Whitmore Lake Area* (Whitmore Lake, MI: Northfield Township Historical Society, 1985), 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 29, 32, 35; [George Sutton], "Northfield Township," *History of Washtenaw County, Michigan; Together with Sketches of Its Cities, Villages and Townships [...]* (1881; repr., Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Mt. Vernon, IN: Windmill Productions, Inc., 1990), 641; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 3-8.

<sup>4</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 651; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 59-60; Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 36-39; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 641, 651; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 8-14.

Lake, then turns southeast through Dexter, Ann Arbor, and Ypsilanti on its way to Lake Erie. The Raisin River, Grand River, and Saline River also cut through small areas of the county.<sup>6</sup>

Much of the county was forested prior to European settlement. Oak, maple, ash, elm, beech, black walnut, and hickory trees are predominant, with open woods and grassy meadows commonplace. The earliest animals included woodland musk ox, American mastodon, Jefferson mammoth, and giant beaver all of which have now been extinct for ten thousand years. They were replaced by large mammals like caribou, moose, elk, deer, black bear, giant beaver, and gray wolves, as well as smaller species like muskrats, beaver, and otter. Bald eagles, wild turkey, prairie chicken, passenger pigeon, and other birds also made their homes in Northfield Township's forests.<sup>7</sup>

### Indigenous Peoples

The earliest inhabitants of the county were peoples of the Potawatomi nation who lived along the waterways. They hunted caribou, moose, elk, deer, muskrat, and other game, and also fished the rivers. They grew corn, pumpkins, squash, and beans, and they gathered wild rice, nuts, berries, and other edible plants. They made pemmican from dried meat and berries, including blueberries and huckleberries that grow wild in the wetland areas of Northfield Township. The Potawatomi are believed to have practiced controlled burns in the forests to help keep the understory clear for hunting. Maple trees are so abundant that the late winter practice of making maple syrup traces back to Indigenous people in the region and continues in front yards throughout the county to this day.<sup>8</sup>

Although artifacts like arrowheads, blades, and jewelry used by these early inhabitants are commonly uncovered during heavy rains or while cultivating fields, relatively few signs of their occupation remain on the landscape today. It is believed that the northern shore of Van Atta Lake was an Indigenous campsite or village due to the numerous artifacts that have been uncovered there. Burial grounds have been discovered in several locations in the township, usually as the result of construction activities. Human remains were found at a home in Whitmore Lake while digging a basement, a second burial site was discovered during construction of US Highway 23 in the late 1950s, and there are possible burial sites at three additional rural locations in the township. Other evidence that Indigenous peoples

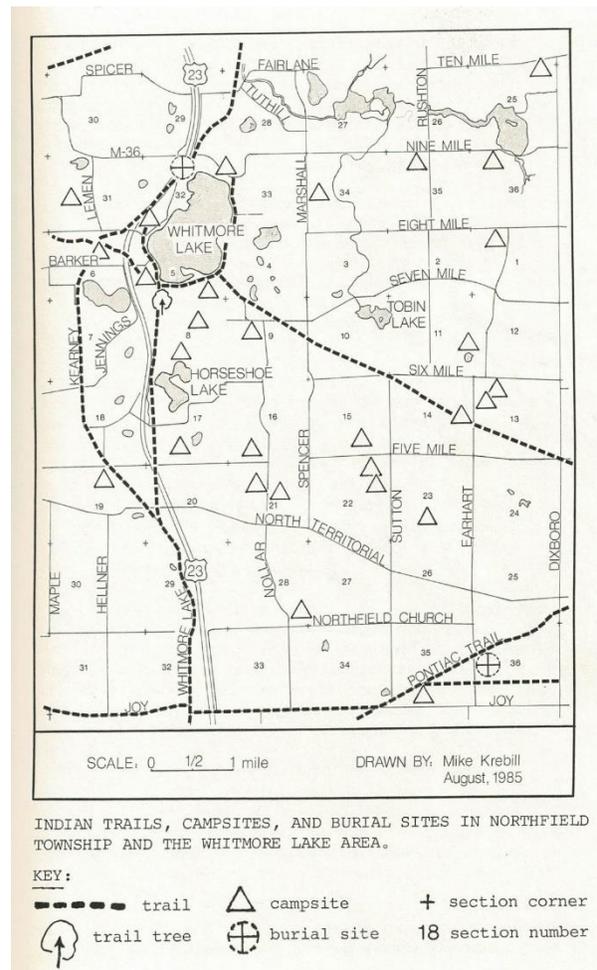


Image 3: Map of Known Indigenous Sites in Northfield Township [Hennings, Looking Back, 21.]

<sup>6</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 40-41.

<sup>8</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 40-41; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 98-99, 123, 134-135.

once occupied the township includes a dugout canoe unearthed from the bottom of Whitmore Lake by a high school student in 1960.<sup>9</sup>

Michigan was originally part of the larger Northwest Territory, which includes present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and the eastern half of Minnesota. The region was ceded by Great Britain to the United States in the Treaty of Paris in 1783 following the Revolutionary War. The Michigan Territory was carved out of this larger region in 1805, however, before the federal government would allow white settlement, they began displacing the Indigenous peoples who already occupied the region, so they could survey, document, and subdivide their land for sale.

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and white settlers appears to have been relatively cordial while the fur trade was strong. However, as fur-bearing animals became overhunted and European settlers sought more land for agriculture, Indigenous peoples were increasingly displaced from their ancestral lands.<sup>10</sup> It is believed that by the turn of the nineteenth century, many Potawatomi in what would become Washtenaw County, already feeling the pressure of European settlement, had abandoned their permanent settlements in favor of seasonal migrations, arriving in spring to take advantage of the hunting, fishing, and growing season.<sup>11</sup> Ottawa and Ojibwe peoples also passed through what would become Washtenaw County, though in fewer numbers.<sup>12</sup> As more European settlers arrived, animals were hunted and displaced from the tribes' hunting grounds, European medicines were needed to combat European diseases in Indigenous populations, and Indigenous peoples increasingly required European goods for their daily lives. As their self-sufficiency decreased, Indigenous peoples began to rely on annuities offered by the government in exchange for their ancestral land, while at the same time, the federal government began to force their removal from the region in a concerted effort to claim Potawatomi land for crop cultivation.<sup>13</sup> In 1807, the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Ojibwe nations signed a treaty with Territorial Governor William Hull, known as the Treaty of Detroit, ceding their lands in southeastern Michigan to the federal government. An 1827 treaty later ceded land in southwestern Michigan, and in the late 1830s, most Potawatomi people who remained in the state were taken west of the Mississippi River by force.<sup>14</sup>

### European Settlement of Southeastern Michigan

The General Land Office survey of the Michigan Territory began in 1815 and was undertaken by the office of the U.S. Surveyor General. In accordance with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the territory was divided by an east-west line known as the base line, which extended west from Detroit and is in part present-day Eight Mile Road, and a north-south line known as the principal meridian, which lies just east of present-day East Lansing. As the counties and townships were surveyed, they were identified not by name, but rather in reference to these two lines. The territory was divided into townships that were six square miles each, which in turn were divided into thirty-six sections that were one square mile each and were numbered beginning with the northeast corner.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Northfield Township in Washtenaw County is noted as Township No. 1 South, Range No. VI East of Meridian.

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<sup>9</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 38, 42-44; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 19. Note: To protect these burial sites and their archaeological integrity, the exact locations of these sites are not included in this report.

<sup>10</sup> R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomis; Keepers of the Fire* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 215-217.

<sup>11</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13-16; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 43-44.

<sup>12</sup> Willis F. Dunbar and George S. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*, Third Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 146.

<sup>13</sup> Edmunds, *The Potawatomis*, 215-217; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 146.

<sup>14</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13-16; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 46; Charles E. Cleland, *Rites of Conquest: The History and Culture of Michigan's Native Americans* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 219-220; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 138; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 147, 150.

<sup>15</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 45-47; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 93, 154-155.

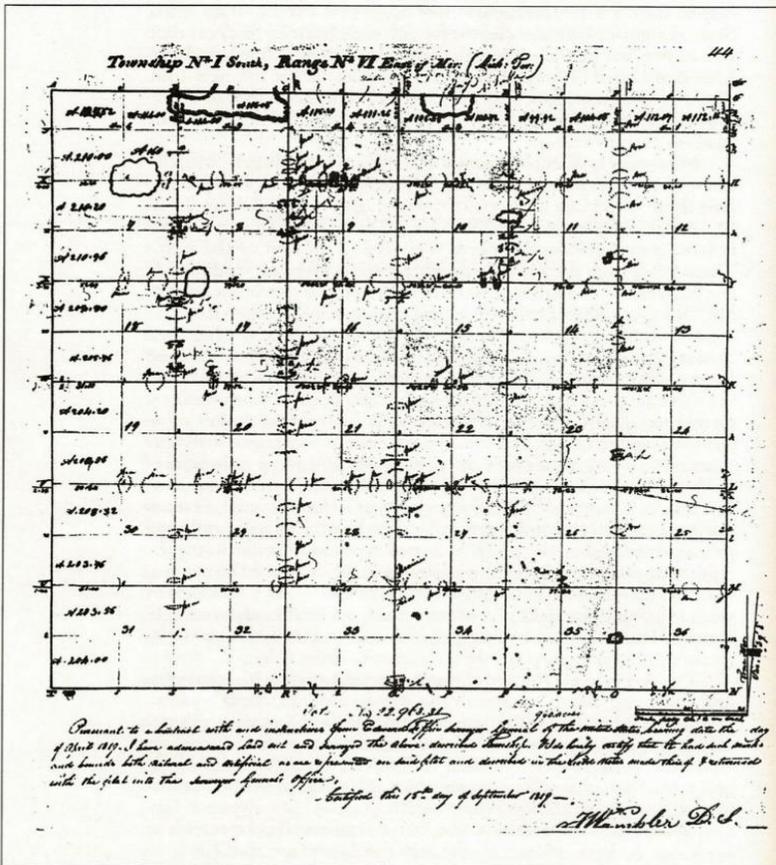


Image 4: Wampler's 1819 Survey Map of Northfield Township  
[Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 48.]

Joseph Wampler was selected as the contracted surveyor for Northfield Township. To demarcate the sections within the township, Wampler drove hardwood posts approximately every half mile along the section boundary lines as measured by a two-man team with a measuring chain. An axeman then cleared a sixteen-foot right-of-way on either side of the boundary line to clearly define the boundary. Wampler began by defining the outer boundary of the township, which included present-day Eight Mile Road as the northern line, present-day Dixboro Road as the eastern line, and present-day Joy Road as the southern line. He then laid out the interior of the township, noting topographical features as he went. The presence of so many lakes and waterways proved a challenge to laying out straight lines on the landscape, which is evidenced by the uneven line through Whitmore Lake that forms the Washtenaw-Livingston county line.<sup>16</sup>

A land office was opened in Detroit in 1818 to begin the sale of land in the Michigan Territory. Sales were initially relatively slow due to a combination of factors. Purchases initially had to be for a minimum of 160 acres at \$2.00 per acre, which limited potential settlers to those who could afford such a large tract.<sup>17</sup> Although the glaciers left behind tillable clays, sandy soils, and gravelly loams suitable for a variety of crops, as the Potawatomi had known, in his survey notes of Northfield Township, Wampler often commented there was “low swampy land,” and U.S. Survey General Edward Tiffin’s 1816 report of the territory alleged that the whole of Michigan was swampland where good agricultural land would be nearly impossible to find.<sup>18</sup> The greatest challenge to settlement, however, was simply reaching the Michigan Territory. Overland travel from the east to the Great Lakes was expensive and time consuming, water travel from the east to the territory on Lake Erie was dangerous and uncomfortable, and arrival by land south of Lake Erie meant crossing the Black Swamp south of Detroit.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of negative reports and difficulty of travel, European settlers had begun to establish permanent homes in southeastern Michigan by the 1820s.<sup>20</sup> Typically, men traveled to the region first to select a

<sup>16</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 45-49; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 155.

<sup>17</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 93, 155.

<sup>18</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 47; Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 156.

<sup>19</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 156, 159.

<sup>20</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 16.

tract of land with tillable soils, good drainage, clean water, and access to transportation routes. After selecting a tract, they had to travel to the nearest land office to purchase the land. They then returned to their homes in the east where they gathered their families and their belongings and made one final trip west to their new homes.<sup>21</sup>

Once a substantial number of settlers purchased land in an area, a county could be established, meaning the boundaries could be drawn and the county named. New counties were governed by an adjacent county until the county was organized, at which point it would operate under its own government.<sup>22</sup> Authorization to establish Washtenaw County came in 1822, and Territorial Governor Lewis Cass chose the name Washtenaw. The name originates from the Ojibwe word “Washtenong,” and myths and legends about the meaning of the word are plentiful. However, the most likely meaning comes from experts at the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, who suggest the name is derived from the Algonquin language, spoken by the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi nations, and means “far country.”<sup>23</sup>

The land that would become Ann Arbor was purchased by John Allen and Elisha Rumsey in 1824, and they immediately petitioned Cass to designate the future community as the county seat.<sup>24</sup> Ypsilanti, Dexter, and Saline were also first settled in 1824, followed by Chelsea, Manchester, Milan, and Whitmore Lake (originally known as Northfield) in the 1830s.<sup>25</sup> The county had quickly grown to 1,500 people by the end of 1825, and in 1826 the formal organization of the county was complete. The county had three townships at that time, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Dexter, with Northfield Township originally part of Ann Arbor Township. Ann Arbor was designated the county seat, and the first territorial court met in the county in 1827. Oliver Whitmore, for whom Whitmore Lake was named, was one of the presiding judges.<sup>26</sup>

Travel to Michigan in the early nineteenth century was expensive and difficult, and most pioneers chose easier westward migration routes into Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois instead. However, by the mid-1820s, settlement in Michigan was facilitated both by changes to land sales and transportation improvements. Land auction rules were changed in 1824 to 80 acres minimum at \$1.25 per acre. Additional land offices opened at Monroe in 1823 and at White Pigeon in 1831, which was moved to Kalamazoo in 1834. Although these changes resulted in an increase in speculative land sales, they also made it more affordable for the average settler to purchase land in the new territory. In addition, transportation was greatly improved following the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes with a waterway across New York state. This route was much faster and less expensive than overland travel, and it was the first water route to the Great Lakes that did not require portage. The same year, Congress provided funds to improve the road from Detroit to Fort Dearborn, known then as the Sauk Trail and today part of U.S. Highway 12. In 1827, this road was extended to Indiana and a road was constructed across the Black Swamp connecting Toledo to Detroit.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1830s, most settlers to Washtenaw County took a sailing ship or steamship from Buffalo across the Great Lakes to Detroit, then traveled early roads to their final destinations. As a result, most settlers during these early years were from New England or western New York. An earlier wave of migration had resulted in settlers from coastal states relocating to western New York, where they quickly grew

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<sup>21</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 165-166.

<sup>22</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 166.

<sup>23</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 18, 21-22; Virgil J. Vogel, *Indian Names in Michigan* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1986), 6-11, 124-125.

<sup>24</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 18-20.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Romig, *Michigan Place Names* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press, 1986); Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 167.

<sup>26</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 20, 22, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 93, 155, 158-161, 164.

disenchanted with the rocky soils and rapidly growing population. After the publication of John Farmer's *The Emigrant's Guide: or Pocket Gazetteer of the Surveyed Parts of Michigan* in 1830, which described the good soils and waterways of the Michigan Territory, many of these settlers continued on to pioneer the Midwestern region.<sup>28</sup>

Settlers coming to Michigan in the early nineteenth century were typically men of some means who were capable farmers. Some were motivated by opportunities to climb the socioeconomic ladder, some were avoiding financial struggles or even bankruptcy in the east, while still others sought to escape personal scandal. The open prairies of southeastern Michigan were appealing to settlers, who could till the land without first having to clear it of trees, but which were often surrounded by stands of forest where timber for building homes and fueling fires was readily available. European settlement in Washtenaw County was also propelled by the presence of substantial waterways, and in particular, the abundance of rapids. This gradual fall of the rivers throughout the county led to the establishment of numerous grist mills and sawmills, which not only took advantage of the natural waterpower, but also utilized dams for power. One of the primary tasks of the settlers – following building shelter, planting crops, and making clothing – was to build grist mills to grind grains into flour. Blacksmithing was also an important early industry, as settlers required nails, chains, yoke rings, axles, hoes, plows, and other metal items in order to survive.<sup>29</sup> Most of the county followed this development pattern, with villages and towns forming around mills and blacksmiths.

Northfield Township is a notable exception to this pattern of settlement. The first European settlers arrived in the area in the 1820s and, although there are a number of lakes and waterways in the township, they established farms rather than mills. Early settlers made up three distinct groups: Protestants from New England, Catholics from Ireland, and Lutherans from Germany. They established their own churches and schools, and established communities around these important institutions. These activities are included in *Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape (1824 to 1880)*.

When the railroad arrived in Northfield Township in the 1880s, two divergent communities began to emerge: the village of Whitmore Lake and the rural landscape that made up the majority of the township. A depot was built at Whitmore Lake that spurred tourism and resulted in the construction of lakeside hotels, vacation cottages, and businesses focused on supporting tourists and seasonal residents. The development of Whitmore Lake as a tourist community is included in *Context 2: Growth of Whitmore Lake – Railroads, Tourism, and Ice (1880 to 1945)*. Meanwhile, the railroad also affected the agricultural practices in the township, facilitating the shipment of farm products and increasing availability of new farming supplies and technology, which is included in *Context 3: Changes to Rural Life (1880 to 1945)*.

Following World War II, the village of Whitmore Lake began to shift from a seasonal tourist population to a permanent lakeside community. Meanwhile, agriculture shifted further from family farming to agribusiness. This is included in *Context 4: The Post-War Era (1945-1980)*. These changes continued through the turn of the twenty-first century, bringing new character to Northfield Township and the village of Whitmore Lake, and are discussed in the *Conclusion: Northfield Township Today (1980 to present)*.

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<sup>28</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 165, 170; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 52, 55, 91.

<sup>29</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 13, 19; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 166, 173.

## Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape (1824 to 1880)

### Settlement of Northfield Township and New England Protestants

Pioneers began to arrive in Northfield Township in the mid-1820s and were typically New Englanders seeking larger land tracts and more fertile soils than could be obtained in New England or New York. The first settler to arrive in Northfield Township was Benjamin Sutton, a New Englander seeking better economic opportunities. Sutton was born in Sussex County, New Jersey, in 1792. He tried his hand at farming, then making whisky from apples, then as a mercantile, but found success in none of these ventures. In 1822, he left New Jersey with his wife, Elizabeth, and six children to avoid bankruptcy.<sup>30</sup>

The Erie Canal had not yet opened, and the road through the Black Swamp had not yet been built, so the Suttons came to Michigan by a difficult and snowy overland route through Canada, arriving in Detroit in the spring of 1823. They temporarily rented a farm in Detroit from cartographer John Farmer. In 1824, Sutton traveled from Detroit with John Allen and Elisha Walker Rumsey. They took the Sauk Trail from Detroit to present-day Plymouth, at which point Allen and Rumsey turned south and later founded the city of Ann Arbor, while Sutton turned north into what would become Northfield Township. Sutton chose a tract of land with open prairie surrounded by crabapple and plum trees, and he returned to Detroit to make his purchase.<sup>31</sup>

He built a one-and-one-half-story, two-room log cabin at the corner of present-day Sutton Road and Pontiac Trail, in what was at that time the northern section of Ann Arbor Township.<sup>32</sup> The logs were hewn on the inside and the outside, and the house had a stick-and-clay chimney with a large hearth for cooking.<sup>33</sup> John Farmer continued to publish maps of the area, and his maps marked the location of Sutton's homestead, and named the right fork of Sauk's Trail as "Sutton's Trail."<sup>34</sup>



Image 5: Section of John Farmer's 1826 Map of the Michigan Territory including Northfield Township and noting "Whitmores L." and "Sutton's"  
[John Farmer, V. Balch, and S. Stiles, "Map of the surveyed part of the territory of Michigan on a scale of 8 miles to an inch" (Detroit, MI: Publisher Not Identified, 1826), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593320> (accessed February 2020).]

The availability of necessary tools and supplies upon arrival in Michigan was important to facilitating the settlement of the territory. Wagons, food, clothing, and other supplies were often purchased upon

<sup>30</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 51, 69.

<sup>31</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 51-53, 69-70; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 24-26.

<sup>32</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 37; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 53.

<sup>33</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 640.

<sup>34</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 53, 70; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 26.

arrival in Detroit, prior to embarking on the primitive roads to points farther west.<sup>35</sup> Settlers who took Sutton's Trail into the northern section of Ann Arbor Township passed by Sutton's homestead, where he sold livestock to the newcomers.<sup>36</sup> In 1831, he traveled to Ohio to purchase cattle, which he then drove to Michigan to start his livestock business. The following year, he brought a second drove of cattle from Illinois.<sup>37</sup>

Moses Allen was the next to settle in what would become Northfield Township. Allen had come from New York in 1825 and settled near Sutton. Allen brought apple seeds, apple saplings, and peach pits, and established an orchard. His brother, William Allen, joined him the following year, purchasing an adjacent tract of land. In 1830, Moses Allen decided to relocate to Plymouth, and Sutton took over the orchard. Sutton also persuaded his own family to purchase Moses' farm and relocate from New Jersey. His father Nathan, his brother George, his brother Isaac and his wife, and his sister Nixon with her husband and two children all came to Michigan.<sup>38</sup>

The Sutton family was also very active in local politics, especially in the establishment of the Northfield Township government. Benjamin Sutton hosted a community meeting at his home in 1832, during which residents of the area prepared a petition to the state legislature for the separation from Ann Arbor Township and the formation of a new township. The petition was approved that December, and the new township was named Northfield. The name "Northfield" may refer to the township's location in northern Washtenaw County, but more likely it is a reference to the settlers' New England roots, as Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire all have towns that bear the same name. The election of township officers took place at Sutton's home the following spring, including John Renwick as township supervisor and George Sutton, Benjamin Sutton's brother, as township clerk, as well as assessors, overseers of the poor, commissioners of highway, committee on schools, school inspectors, and constables. Benjamin Sutton left Northfield Township in 1834 for greater opportunities in livestock dealing in Illinois, selling his Michigan lands and livestock to his father and brothers. Meanwhile, George Sutton went on to serve as a township supervisor, justice of the peace, and a representative in the state legislature.<sup>39</sup>

One of the first tasks undertaken by the new township government was to improve the roads. A dirt road connected the township to Ann Arbor, present-day Pontiac Trail, and in 1832, a bridge was built over the Huron River so farmers no longer had to raft the crossing. These improvements made travel into the area significantly easier, and by 1840, Washtenaw County was the second most populated in the new state of Michigan, behind only Wayne County, where Detroit is located. In the 1850s, a plank road was built from Ann Arbor to Howell, passing through Northfield Township on present-day Whitmore Lake Road.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most prominent figures in the new community was the postmaster. The Northfield Post Office was established in a log building in Whitmore Lake in 1834, and George Dexter served as the first postmaster. Dr. Nelson S. Halleck took over the position in 1836 and operated the post office from his home at 9615 Main Street, which remains standing although substantially altered. Halleck was succeeded briefly by William Nelson Stevens, who served as postmaster from 1852 to 1854. When Joseph Pray took the position in 1854, the post office was relocated to Pray's general store, which also remains extant although substantially altered, and the post office name was changed from Northfield to Whitmore Lake. A second post office was established in 1850 at the Roswell Curtis Farm

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<sup>35</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 165.

<sup>36</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 53-54; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 27.

<sup>37</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 636; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 71; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 53-55, 70-71; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 639; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 54-55, 69, 71, 91; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 640-641, 644; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 29-30; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 76.

<sup>40</sup> Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 167; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 83, 93-94; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 77.

at 8275 Rushton Road. That post office was known as Gravel Run, the namesake of a small stream flowing into Tobin Lake. Curtis served as the postmaster until he sold the farm to William Doty around 1864, and Doty took over the postmaster responsibilities. The office closed temporarily in 1875, then closed permanently in 1878.<sup>41</sup> The Curtis-Doty farmhouse remains extant, although it is not known if any evidence of the post office remains intact.

As more settlers continued to arrive in the area, community institutions began to form among the growing population. In particular, churches formed the center of community life, providing a social network for mutual support and assistance among those who left family, friends, and other connections to seek new opportunities in the Michigan Territory. A Methodist Church formed in the early 1830s, primarily by Protestant settlers who had come to the area from New York. By 1832, Reverend Alvin Billings was holding services in the Wagner School. A second group formed a few years later and met at the Matthews School, also led by Reverend Billings. These groups later merged as the First Methodist Church of Northfield. A church building was constructed in 1847 at the corner of North Territorial Road and Earhart Road, later known as Leland's Corners, and a cemetery was established north of the church known as the Leland Cemetery. Membership dwindled in the early twentieth century, with only thirty-six members in 1909 and eighteen in 1914, so the congregation dissolved in 1915, and members joined nearby churches in Whitmore Lake and Ann Arbor instead. The church was demolished, but the Leland Cemetery on Earhart Road remains.<sup>42</sup>

By the 1830s, a small group of Methodists were also meeting in Whitmore Lake, gathering at various members' homes and often meeting at the Christian Zuck House at 9301 Main Street after its completion in 1833.<sup>43</sup> In 1866, Louis R. Buchoz and Joseph Pray donated land for a church building on the shore of Whitmore Lake. A church circuit was formed in 1867, with a traveling pastor to serve the Whitmore Lake, Hamburg, and Webster churches. The following year, the church building was completed, and remains extant at 9318 Main Street. To save costs, the church did not hire an architect. Instead, church construction was overseen by master carpenters among the congregants, Milton Field and Andrew Sawyer, with assistance from James Stilson, another local carpenter, and Jeremiah Jacobs, a local builder. The building cost less than \$1,000 to build. The church also operated a Sunday School.<sup>44</sup>



*Image 6: Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1890s  
[from the personal collection of Jacob Donner (local resident),  
originally from the personal collection of the Pray family.]*

<sup>41</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 133-135; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 89-90.

<sup>42</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 649-650; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 60-61, 141-144, 321; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 9498.

<sup>43</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 650; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 143-144; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 37-40, 94-98.

<sup>44</sup> Myrta A. Dempster and Clare Rorabacher, "Whitmore Lake Community Methodist Church History, 1867-1962" (Whitmore Lake, MI: Whitmore Lake Community Methodist Church, 1962), 1-3; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 143-144; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 94-98.

The church grew quickly over the following decades, and by 1878, the congregation included about fifty people. In 1902, the congregation began looking for a suitable site to establish a cemetery, and a site at Nine Mile Road and East Shore Drive in Livingston County was acquired two years later. Throughout the twentieth century, the church continued to serve as an important community institution. Although the church closed briefly during the Great Depression, it had reopened with about sixty members by 1943. By the 1950s, the congregation had grown to 133 members, and in 1953, the church was renamed the Whitmore Lake Community Methodist Church.<sup>45</sup> In 1962, several cottages were moved from the land adjacent to the church to make room for the parking lot. The last cottage, which served as the parsonage, was demolished in the early 1980s.<sup>46</sup> By 2018, the church was known as the Wesley United Methodist Church, and the congregation merged with the First United Methodist Church in Brighton, holding services at both locations.<sup>47</sup>

## Irish Settlement

The second group to settle in Northfield Township, especially the western section, were Irish immigrants who began to arrive in the late 1820s.<sup>48</sup> Most had been farmers in Ireland, but when they arrived in New England, many took jobs as domestic servants and laborers, and those who did try farming found rocky soils. As a result, many of the early Irish settlers in the Michigan Territory were seeking affordable land with good soils.<sup>49</sup> Others had been employed on the Erie Canal, and then utilized the completed canal to migrate west following its completion in 1825.<sup>50</sup>

The Irish immigrants who arrived in Northfield Township were devout Catholics, and soon after their arrival in the late 1820s formed a small congregation. They initially held mass in their homes, and by 1829 were led by visiting priest Father Patrick O'Kelly, who had ministered to Irish laborers building the Erie Canal then traveled to Michigan with them when it was completed. By 1831, there were about ten families in the congregation. The parishioners built a log church near where the present-day rectory is located, which became the third Catholic parish in Michigan and the first English-speaking Catholic parish. The congregation continued to grow as more Irish immigrants arrived in the area. The log church was replaced in 1837 by a frame building near the present-day cemetery. By 1850, the congregation had grown to about ninety families, so this building was expanded and named St. Bridget's Parish. In 1865, the parish was assigned its first pastor-in-residence, and the first rectory was built adjacent to the church that year, although it was later moved and then destroyed by fire in the 1930s. The cornerstone for the present church building at 5671 Whitmore Lake Road was laid in 1877, and oral tradition suggests parishioners themselves hauled stone and brick to the site from Ohio to build the church over the following months. The church was completed and dedicated the following year as St. Patrick's, although the reason for the name change is not known. The present rectory was built in 1890, and the church bell was also installed that year and remains in place today.<sup>51</sup>

The presence of the Catholic church helped fuel continued immigration of people from Ireland to Northfield Township, especially during the potato famine in the 1840s. William Doty arrived in 1831 and bought a tract of land at 8275 Rushton Road, Martin and Margaret O'Connor came to Northfield

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<sup>45</sup> Dempster and Rorabacher, "Whitmore Lake Community Methodist Church History," 5, 10, 16-17, 22-23, 27-29; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 144.

<sup>46</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 144-145.

<sup>47</sup> First United Methodist Church, "Whitmore Lake Campus," <https://www.brightonfumc.org/coming-july-1-one-church-two-locations> (accessed February 2021).

<sup>48</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 37; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642.

<sup>49</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 79-80.

<sup>50</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 39.

<sup>51</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 37-39; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642, 648-649; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 57-58, 79-81, 83, 154-157; Thomas Patrick Hennings, "From the Marshgrasses... A History of St. Patrick's of Northfield," Local History Room, Northfield Township Area Library, Whitmore Lake, Michigan; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 107-114.



Image 7: St. Patrick Catholic Church and Rectory c.1900  
 [Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 158.]

Township soon after their marriage in 1832 and established a farm at 2720 Five Mile Road, James and Mary Kennedy arrived in 1835, settling on a tract of land at 6905 Sutton Road, and all of these farms remain extant. Not all who immigrated to the area owned their own farmland upon arrival however. Some Irish women took jobs as domestic servants in Ann Arbor, while men worked as laborers on their neighbors' farms. Irish-Catholics commonly experienced discrimination as political parties of the mid-1800s formed around anti-immigration platforms, which likely contributed to economic struggles, and as a result, many Irish immigrants were still working as farm laborers and domestic servants by the 1880 census. Discrimination against Catholics at that time made the support of the

church and surrounding Irish community especially important for newcomers. Jack Coyle, who was a successful farmer and member of St. Patrick Catholic Church, loaned money to Irish neighbors who were denied loans by banks to purchase land, livestock, or equipment.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the importance of the church in supporting the community, Irish-owned businesses also clustered together to serve the growing immigrant population. One of these enclaves was Welch's Corners, which formed as a small crossroads community at the present-day intersection of Whitmore Lake Road and North Territorial Road, not far from St. Patrick Catholic Church and surrounded by Irish-owned farmsteads. The Midway Tavern opened in the 1830s and served both local Irish and New England settlers. By the 1850s, it also served travelers utilizing the plank road or the public stagecoach line connecting Ann Arbor to Howell on present-day Whitmore Lake Road, or traveling to and from Detroit on present-day North Territorial Road. The two roads formed one of the largest and most heavily traveled intersections in the township at that time, and additional business opened to serve settlers traveling through the area. In 1857, Irish immigrant Christopher Donagan opened a blacksmith shop at the crossroads, and there was a general store operating there by that time as well.<sup>53</sup>

### German Settlement

German immigrants also sought better opportunities in the United States and began arriving in Northfield Township in the 1830s, primarily settling in the southern and southwestern sections.

<sup>52</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 39; Stevens, *Northfield Township*, 64-65, 82, 85; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 107-114.

<sup>53</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Township*, 64, 94-95; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 107-114.

Michigan was recruiting German immigrants to settle in the state and passed legislation in 1848 to “encourage land purchase by newcomers.” Many of those who settled in Northfield Township were from Württemberg, Germany, and therefore shared a common dialect.<sup>54</sup>

Lutheran pastor Frederick Schmid arrived in the United States in 1833 and by 1869 a congregation of about forty people had formed in southern Northfield Township, which was known by the German name St. Johannes Gemeinde. The congregation originally met at the Sutton School on East Joy Road at Pontiac Trail. Services were spoken in German, and education classes focused not only on religious doctrine, but also traditional German language and culture. In 1875, the congregation purchased three acres of land from



*Image 8: St. John's Lutheran Church and Rectory in 1914  
[Stevens, Northfield Harvest, 145.]*

William P. Groves to build a church. A frame church building was completed that year and the adjacent cemetery was laid out. They also built a parsonage, which was occupied by the first resident preacher in 1878. The congregation continued to grow over the next few decades, and as a result, the church and parsonage were expanded and remodeled in the 1920s. On March 13, 1932, the church and parsonage were both completely destroyed by fire, as well as all early church records. The congregation worked quickly to replace the buildings. A new parsonage was completed that June, and in August the cornerstone was laid for the new sanctuary, which was completed in November.<sup>55</sup>

### **Early Rural Education**

In addition to the churches built by each of the ethnic groups who settled in Northfield Township, the township is also dotted with historic rural schools. Northfield Township residents were served by ten rural schools, eight of which were located within the township boundaries. The schools initially had two sessions: a three-month winter session for boys over ten years of age who worked their family farms in the summer months, and a four-month session in the summer for younger children. At that time, children attended six days a week for six to eight hours each day. Michigan residents balked at taxes to fund schools until around 1870, and in 1880, the state mandated a nine-month year for all children ages six to sixteen. Northfield schools, like many rural areas, suspended school during harvest times. Students studied reading, writing, grammar, spelling, history, and arithmetic, and were required to provide their own books.<sup>56</sup>

The first school in the township was built by Benjamin Sutton in 1828 near his home at East Joy Road and Pontiac Trail. Known as the Sutton School, the original log building was replaced with a brick one in 1875, which remains standing at 2931 East Joy Road, and remained in operation until consolidated

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<sup>54</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 65, 146.

<sup>55</sup> [Sutton], “Northfield Township,” 650; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 145-147.

<sup>56</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167-169.

with Whitmore Lake Public Schools in 1960.<sup>57</sup> The Leland School, constructed at 6025 Earhart Road in 1867, is a brick building that replaced an earlier frame one, which was constructed on land owned by Joshua Leland. Leland School was consolidated with Whitmore Lake Public Schools in 1959.<sup>58</sup> Maple Ridge School is a frame building constructed at 4107 Six Mile Road in 1937, which replaced an earlier stone school destroyed that year by fire. The school remained in operation until the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> Welch's Corners School at 350 West North Territorial Road was originally known as Multhaup School for the family that owned the land, the name sometimes anglicized as Multoph. The first school was built in 1832 and was replaced by the current building in 1887. The school was expanded with a concrete block addition in 1951, and in 1959, as a result of consolidation, it became the Whitmore Lake Elementary School. The school remained in use until 1966.<sup>60</sup> All four of these school buildings remain extant but have been substantially altered for use as private residences.

An additional four schools are no longer extant. The Matthews School, later known as Fohey, was built in 1835 near the intersection of Seven Mile Road and Spencer Road. This school operated at least into the 1940s but was no longer standing by the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> The Wagner School, later known as Keenan School and then Murray School, was built in the early 1830s near the intersection of Five Mile Road and Earhart Road and also operated until at least the 1940s but was demolished by the 1990s.<sup>62</sup> The Moe School, named for Abraham Moe who donated the land for the school, was established in 1839 on Whitmore Lake Road near the intersection of East Joy Road. The Braun family later purchased the Moe farm with the school then becoming known as the Braun School. The first building was a log school, which was replaced by a frame school, which was replaced by a brick school, and the final school building was built of brick and covered in stucco. The Braun School district straddled the Northfield-Ann Arbor township line, so it was part of neither district, and as a result, students were forced to pay tuition for high school. It remained in operation until the 1960s when the district became part of the Ann Arbor school system, and the building was demolished in 2015.<sup>63</sup> The Flintoft School, later known as Shaw School, was a frame school located at 1960 East North Territorial Road. The first school at this location was a log building constructed in 1840, which was replaced by another log building in 1845, which in turn was replaced with a frame building in 1870. The school was named for Robert Flintoft who owned the adjacent farm and allowed the school use of his well for a small fee. Flintoft School was consolidated with Whitmore Lake Public Schools in 1957 and was demolished in 2007.<sup>64</sup>

## The Village of Whitmore Lake

Jonathan F. Stratton was one of the surveyors who surveyed the Sauk Trail in 1825 when improvements were funded by Congress. After he and his surveying partner, Orange Risdon, completed the survey from Detroit to Ypsilanti, Stratton began surveying the northern and western areas of Washtenaw County. Oliver Whitmore, who had recently settled in the county and later served as a judge in Ann Arbor, traveled with Stratton. They camped on the banks of a large lake, which Stratton later named Whitmore Lake in honor of his friend. Cartographer John Farmer used Stratton's sketches

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<sup>57</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 53, 167-168, 191; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 636, 650-651; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 27-28, 117.

<sup>58</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167-168, 191; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 124-125.

<sup>59</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167, 177-178.

<sup>60</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167, 179-180, 191.

<sup>61</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167, 175.

<sup>62</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167, 177.

<sup>63</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Township*, 167, 187-188; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 135-138.

<sup>64</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 167, 178-179, 191; Jennifer DeLisle (NTHS President), email communication with author, July 13, 2021; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 131.

to publish a territorial map of the county in 1826, which was the first to include the name Whitmore Lake.<sup>65</sup>

An early business district stretched along Main Street from the south side of Margaret Street northward to Barker Road, with residential areas extending both north and south of the business district. By around 1840, a physician's office was operating at the home of Dr. Nelson S. Halleck at 9615 Main Street, which remains extant but highly altered. William Nelson Stevens operated a general store, and his 1850 house at 9429 Main Street also served as an inn known as the Tremont House. The house remains extant, although highly altered. Williams Nelson Stevens' brother, Albert, also settled in Whitmore Lake, and his house at 125 Barker Road has been altered for use as the Northfield Township Area Library. Albert Stevens operated the Clifton House Inn, which had been built by Albert Burt in 1842 just north of his brother's house but is no longer extant, and the Lake House Inn, at the southwest corner of Barker Road and Main Street, which is also no longer standing. The Clifton House was not only known as a quality inn for travelers on the Detroit-Jackson stage line and later railroad passengers, but also as the recruitment location for the Third Michigan Cavalry in 1861.<sup>66</sup>

John Rane's General Store was opened at 9541 Main Street in 1851, followed by Joseph Pray's General Store at 9531 Main Street, which also housed the post office from 1864 to 1856 when Pray served as postmaster. W.D. Moss built a third general store at 9519 Main Street in 1895, which was later owned by Rane's grandson, John W. Rane. He also served as postmaster, and his general store housed the post office from 1915 to 1930. John W. Rane's house was built south of the store at 9509 Main Street. These buildings all remain extant but have been substantially altered. A small barber shop was originally located between the Pray and Rane general stores, but it has been demolished. Businesses were also located on the east side of Main Street, but they were replaced with marinas and lakeside cottages in the mid-to-late twentieth century.<sup>67</sup>

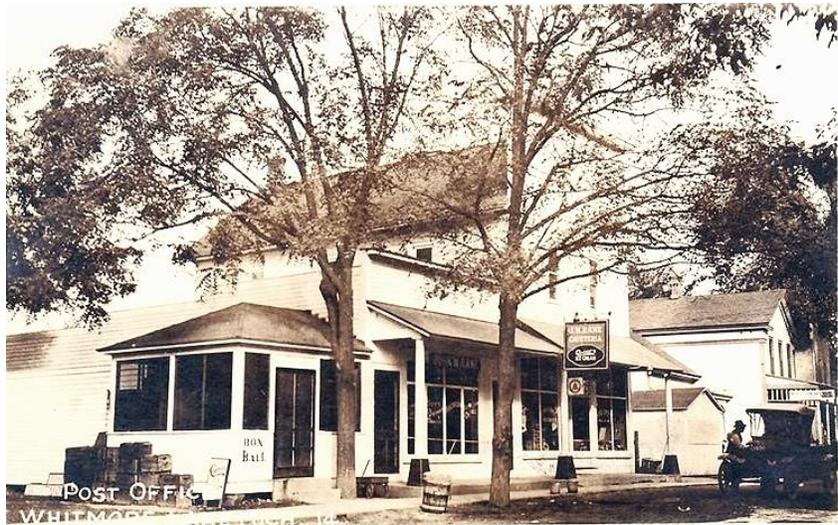


Image 9: Postcard Image of John W. Rane's General Store and Post Office [Personal Collection of Wystan Stevens, [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) (accessed February 2021).]

## Agriculture and Subsistence

Although Washtenaw County's waterways were ideally suited for mill operations, and although most of the county's early settlements formed around mills, Northfield Township's settlement and economy were based in agriculture. The industry schedule in the 1850 census lists only one cooper and ashery in the township, and the 1860 and 1870 censuses recorded no industry schedule for the township at

<sup>65</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 59-60; Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 24; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 197-216, 231-236, 252; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 157-173.

<sup>67</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 197-216; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 89-90.

all.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in the 1856 business directory, nearly every village in the county had a grist, paper, plaster, saw, or shingle mill, with the exception of Whitmore Lake. The only industry noted in the township at that time was a dry kiln, which was no longer in operation by the time the 1864 directory was published. Instead, Northfield was an agricultural landscape.<sup>69</sup>

The earliest farmers in Northfield Township were subsistence farmers concerned primarily with self-sufficiency, rather than profitability, and therefore farms were small-scale, generalized operations. Farmers grew Indian corn, wheat, oats, barley, hay, and potatoes – many of which are still grown in the township today. In the fall they grew strawberries, squash, and pumpkins. They also raised sheep, hogs, and cattle, and kept dogs to protect their livestock from predators and crops from deer and other native grazers. Sheep-shearing took place each spring, while sheep, hogs, and sometimes cattle were slaughtered in the fall. Farmers also harvested in the fall, working together to cut and shock grain, pitch hay, and gather vegetables. Crabapple and plum trees were plentiful, and settlers brought pear, apple, and peach trees to the region as well. Wells provided water, pulled up by hand at first and later by windmills.<sup>70</sup>

Northfield Township is relatively flat, however the watertable is also relatively high, resulting in abundant swamps and marshes. Not long after their arrival, settlers began to drain the swampland throughout the township to gain more acreage for agriculture by digging ditches and canals, or altering streams to be deeper, straighter, or longer. These early drainage efforts were the responsibility of each land owner at that time, but by the 1830s, the township had a permitting system in place for private owners to build and maintain drains. In the 1840s, public health became a factor in controlling swampland and in turn mosquitoes, and in 1851, the county began assuming ownership and responsibility for the drainage systems. By that time, a number of canals and ditches drained into Horseshoe and Whitmore lakes, and by the 1880s, about forty miles of drainage system had been built. Many of these changes remain visible on the landscape today, including about twenty-six miles of man-made or altered drainage, and twelve major drains remain overseen by the county.<sup>71</sup> One such drain remaining extant is the O'Connor Drain, which flows northwest through the township into Horseshoe Lake.

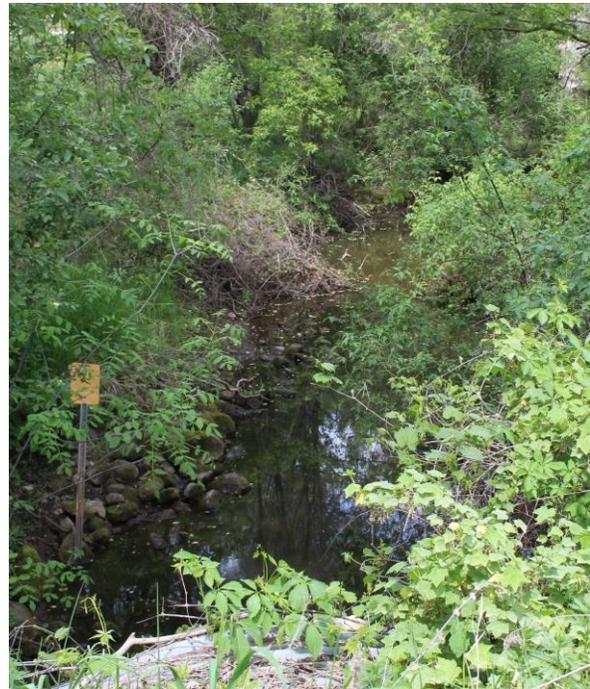


Image 10: O'Connor Drain at Nollar Road

The 1850 agricultural census recorded 162 farms in Northfield Township. A comparison of improved land, meaning land used in cultivation, pasture, orchards, gardens, fallow, or occupied by buildings,

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<sup>68</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Schedule 5 - Products of Industry in Northfield [Township] in the County of Washtenaw," 1850, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>69</sup> Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, "Washtenaw County Michigan Plat Maps 1856 and 1864" (Ann Arbor, MI: Genealogical Society of Washtenaw County, Michigan, Inc., 1997), 22-24, 107-108.

<sup>70</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 641; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 40, 97, 99-100; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan: An Historic Context for the Theme of Agriculture* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, Michigan State University, 2004), 11.

<sup>71</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 27, 93, 107-108; [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 641; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 12; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 50-51.

shows that over half of these farms were fewer than fifty acres and only about five percent were greater than 150 acres. Most farmers produced wheat, Indian corn, buckwheat, hay, Irish potatoes, and sometimes oats, and most had as many as five milk cows, fifty sheep, and fifteen hogs. Some farmers grew white beans, although they were highly susceptible to blight, and some farmers also had orchards at that time. Most farms produced up to 100 pounds of wool and 100-200 pounds of butter.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to draining swampy land, other improvements in agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century included the use of commercial fertilizers, the introduction of improved crop varieties, and the use of steel plows, mowers, reapers, threshers, and other new machinery. The improvements led to increased production with less human labor, and as a result, farmers began to operate larger farms with greater production and higher profits.<sup>73</sup> Of the 187 farms recorded in the 1870 agricultural census, just under forty percent were fifty acres or fewer, about half were between fifty and 150 acres, and about ten percent were larger than 150 acres.<sup>74</sup>

The arrival of the railroad in southern Michigan opened new markets for Northfield Township farmers who were able to transport their products to Ann Arbor for distribution. As a result, subsistence crops began to find markets as cash crops, such as corn, which began to be used as livestock feed. The demand for wool and dairy products grew, and as the numbers of livestock increased, hay became an increasingly important cash crop. The popularity of potatoes and apples as export crops also grew. Wheat remained the most important cash crop during this time, and Northfield Township had nearly 14,000 acres in cultivation and led the county in wheat production.<sup>75</sup> The 1870 agricultural census shows Northfield Township farmers produced wheat, Indian corn, oats, hay, Irish potatoes and sometimes barley, and most had as many as ten milk cows, more than fifty sheep, and as many as fifteen hogs. White bean farming had fallen out of favor in the area, but most farms included an orchard, usually for apples. Most farms by this time produced 100-500 pounds of wool and 300-600 pounds of butter.<sup>76</sup> Northfield Township farmers took vegetables, fruit, and wool by wagon to Ann Arbor markets, where produce could be shipped to Toledo, Detroit, or other nearby cities by train, sold in local markets, or bartered in town for other goods. Wool was taken to carding mills in Ann Arbor or Dehli Mills, just northwest of Ann Arbor, and a wool factory was located at Foster's Station, on the Huron River northwest of Ann Arbor. All three were served by the Michigan Central Railroad, which shipped processed wool to larger eastern textile operations. Cattle from several farms were often gathered into larger herds and driven to Detroit or other railroad depots for shipping to larger markets.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to farming, early settlers also took advantage of the abundance of their environment. They hunted white-tailed deer, ducks, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, and geese, and also caught pickerel, pike, bass, and other fish. Wild berries were abundant seasonally, wild honey was easily found in the trees, and settlers also made maple syrup.<sup>78</sup> Settlers utilized the abundant prairie grasses to feed and bed livestock, fill mattresses, and insulate ice blocks cut from the lakes in winter. Prairie grasses that helped sustain the township's early inhabitants are still seen on the landscape today. Big Bluestem,

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<sup>72</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Schedule 4 - Productions of Agriculture in Northfield Township in the County of Washtenaw," 1850, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 110.

<sup>73</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 110; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Schedule 3 - Productions of Agriculture in Northfield Township in the County of Washtenaw," 1870, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>75</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 97; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 12-13; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 53.

<sup>76</sup> United States Census Bureau, "Schedule 3 - Productions of Agriculture in Northfield Township in the County of Washtenaw," 1870, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>77</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 99, 109.

<sup>78</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw*, 21; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 75; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 11.

also known as Turkey-Foot Grass, may be found on gravel roadsides throughout the township. Switchgrass grows well in hot weather and is therefore good for pasture in the summer months, while providing nesting material and winter cover for wild animals and birds.<sup>79</sup>

The once-abundant caribou, moose, elk, and bears had largely been hunted out of the region prior to the arrival of European settlers, but European settlement had its own negative impacts on the ecosystem of Northfield Township. Hunting and habitat loss caused the decline of gray wolves, bald eagles, beaver, otter, wild turkey, prairie chicken, and passenger pigeon. Even white-tailed deer, which provided venison as a staple of the settlers' diet as well as hides for clothing and shoes, were nearly extinct by the 1880s. Although populations of deer, beaver, and wild turkey have recovered in the region, prairie chicken, bald eagles, and otter remain uncommon, gray wolf populations remain limited to the Upper Peninsula, and the passenger pigeon has been extinct since 1914. Some species are relatively new arrivals to southeastern Michigan, with the opossum and Northern Cardinal extending their range northward in the late 1800s, English House Sparrows and European Starlings introduced in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the European elm bark beetle and gypsy moth, both of which kill trees with alarming efficiency, also arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>80</sup>

## **Context 2: Growth of Whitmore Lake – Railroads, Tourism, and Ice (1880 to 1945)**

### **Arrival of the Railroad**

Although houses and hotels were built on the lakeshore as early as the 1830s, it was the arrival of the railroad that had the biggest impact on the village of Whitmore Lake. The earliest railroad in the county connected Ann Arbor to Detroit in the late 1830s, but it was decades before the railroads extended to Northfield Township. The Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad was completed between the two cities in 1878. In 1880, the Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad merged with the Grand Trunk Railroad to become the Toledo, Ann Arbor, & Grand Trunk Railway, and the line was extended north of Ann Arbor after a bridge was constructed over the Huron River that year. The line originally stopped at Leland's Corners, a crossroads community in Northfield Township later known as Emery, then continued into Livingston County to the Worden Depot and South Lyon by 1881. The Toledo, Ann Arbor, & Grand Trunk Railway merged with the Michigan Air Line Railway to become the Toledo, Ann Arbor, & Northern Michigan Railroad in 1884. Over the next few years, the railroad company continued to acquire smaller railroad lines across northern Michigan, and by 1886, the line was completed from Ann Arbor through Leland's Corners to Whitmore Lake, Owosso, and Mt. Pleasant, finally ending at the Lake Michigan car ferries at Frankfort and Elberta. The railroad soon replaced waterways as the means of transporting people and goods in the villages and cities throughout Washtenaw County.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the railroad's success, it faced challenges. The line from Leland's Corners to Worden was not well used, and in 1890 the railroad began efforts to decommission the line due to its unprofitability. There was much resistance from residents and business owners in Worden, but in 1891, under somewhat secretive circumstances, the section of tracks was removed. Additionally, the railroad was not well financed, and therefore selected the cheapest land available regardless of the track curvature

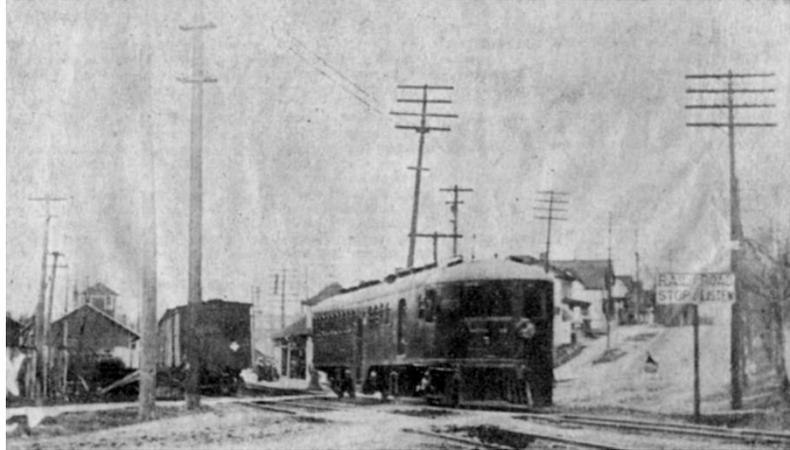
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<sup>79</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 40.

<sup>80</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 41, 75; Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 21; Dunbar and May, *Michigan*, 173.

<sup>81</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 27, 47, 50; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 217; Dale Berry, ed., "Railroad: Toledo & Ann Arbor Railroad," *Michigan Railroads*, <http://www.michiganrailroads.com/railroads-in-history/486-t-v/4081-toledo-ann-arbor-railroad> (accessed February 2021); Dale Berry, ed., "Railroad: Toledo, Ann Arbor and Grand Trunk Railway," *Michigan Railroads*, <http://www.michiganrailroads.com/railroads-in-history/486-t-v/4076-toledo-ann-arbor-and-grand-trunk-railway-company-the> (accessed February 2021); Dale Berry, ed., "Railroad: Toledo, Ann Arbor & North Michigan Railroad," *Michigan Railroads*, <http://www.michiganrailroads.com/railroads-in-history/486-t-v/4072-toledo-ann-arbor-north-michigan-railroad> (accessed February 2021).

required to connect stations, the unevenness of the topography, or how well the land drained. As a result, a dangerous bend through swampy land was constructed at Leland's Corners to connect Ann Arbor to Whitmore Lake. Soon after the railroad was reorganized to become the Ann Arbor Railroad in 1895, the Leland's Corner bend was determined to be too dangerous to remain in use. The tracks were removed in 1896 and the line rerouted along a more direct route from Ann Arbor to Whitmore Lake, which remains the railroad path today. After the loss of the railroad, the crossroads community at Leland's Corners faded out of existence.<sup>82</sup>



*Image 11: Gasoline-Powered McKeen Rail Cars  
Running the "Ping-Pong" Route*

*["Gasoline-powered McKeen rail cars," Ann Arbor District Library, [https://aadl.org/aastreet/site4/aastreet\\_pingpong2](https://aadl.org/aastreet/site4/aastreet_pingpong2) (accessed February 2021), original at Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.]*

Soon after the railroad was completed to the village of Whitmore Lake, summer tourists began to take advantage of the inexpensive and convenient transportation to visit the lake's beaches, stay at the local hotels, and enjoy local restaurants and entertainment. Tourists initially traveled on what was known as the "Ping Pong," a passenger car pulled by an engine that made the trip back and forth between Whitmore Lake and Ann Arbor several times a day by the early 1900s.<sup>83</sup>



*Image 12: Image of Whitmore Lake Depot on Barker Road  
[Personal Collection of Wystan Stevens, [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)  
(accessed February 2021).]*

The first depot in the village of Whitmore Lake was located in the 9300 block of Main Street, an area known as "the Grove." Around 1900, the depot was moved to Barker Road, but it was destroyed by fire in 1911. Initially a boxcar was converted for use as a ticket office, but after a downpour the following year caused delays in trains that left travelers stranded for hours without shelter, a new depot was constructed. In 1921, this depot was also destroyed by fire, but it was replaced relatively quickly, and this third building remained in use until 1950. The depot was demolished soon after closing, although the tracks remain in use today.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 217-223; Dale Berry, ed., "Railroad: The Ann Arbor Railroad Company," *Michigan Railroads*, <http://www.michiganrailroads.com/railroads-in-history/456-a/2344-ann-arbor-railroad-company-the> (accessed February 2020).

<sup>83</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 223, 225-226.

<sup>84</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 225-228; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 155-156.

## Tourism at Whitmore Lake

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Whitmore Lake was a popular summer destination for wealthy vacationers from Ann Arbor, southern Michigan, and northern Ohio.<sup>85</sup> Many of these visitors stayed in one of the hotels in Whitmore Lake. The first hotel was built in 1842 in the 9400 block of Main Street, at the south end of the business district. It was first operated by Albert Burt, but it passed through several owners during its history. The original name is not known, but it was called the Clifton House by the late nineteenth century and was renamed the Lake View Hotel in the early twentieth century. Throughout its history, the hotel hosted events attended by both local residents and guests staying at the inn, including Fourth of July events, picnics and gatherings for local organizations, harvest balls, and “fish, frog, and chicken dinners.” William Zemke bought the hotel in 1925, and it served as the Whitmore Country Club until the 1930s. It operated as a popular tavern from 1933, following the repeal of Prohibition, until it was destroyed by fire in 1935.<sup>86</sup>

A second hotel was built in 1852 by William West and was known as West’s Lake House. It was located at the southwest corner of Barker Road and Main Street at the north end of the business district and was larger than the Clifton House with three floors. Although it had several owners, it was owned by members of the Stevens family for most of its history. After the repeal of Prohibition, the owner obtained the first liquor license for the hotel, and it became known as Stevens Lake House and Beer Garden. Like the Clifton House, the Lake House offered local entertainment such as lake excursions,



Image 13: Lake House Pavilion c.1924  
[Personal Collection of Jacob Donner (local resident)]

dinners, dancing, and concerts. In 1923, Stevens built the Lake House Pavilion, a large dance hall across the street from the hotel, and operated a bus line from the venue to Ann Arbor. The pavilion closed in the 1930s but later served as a roller rink then a boxing and wrestling venue. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1942, and the Lake House Pavilion has been demolished.<sup>87</sup>

The lake itself also drew tourists to the small village. The hotels not only offered dinners and dancing, but also sailboats, to those guests with the skills to navigate one, and rowboats with fishing tackle. Nearly thirty species of fish were recorded in the lake ecosystem in the early twentieth century, including bluntnose minnows, bullheads, dogfish, bass, mud pike, and chubsuckers. To offset the

<sup>85</sup> Hennings, “From the Marshgrasses.”

<sup>86</sup> [Sutton], “Northfield Township,” 651; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 231-240; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 157-165.

<sup>87</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 242-247; 256-257; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 165-173.

ecological impacts of fishing on the lake, fish stocking programs began in the 1930s, and initially focused on bluegill, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch.<sup>88</sup>



Image 14: Boaters on Whitmore Lake  
[Photo by Darwin E. White, Personal Collection of Wylan Stevens, [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) (accessed February 2021).]

There were also ferries to carry tourists between Pray's Landing on the southeast end of the lake, the Lake House hotel on the east side, and Stilsonburg and Groomes bathing beaches in Livingston County to the north. The first known ferries were the *Lizzie Payne*, which began operating in 1884, and the *Oceola*, which began running the following year, both owned by Emory Snell. By around 1900, neither remained in operation, having either sank or been scuttled. In 1908, the *Jenny D* took their place. This vessel operated under several owners, but during the Great Depression passenger traffic declined so dramatically that a ferry was no longer needed, and the boat was scuttled.<sup>89</sup>

The local churches expanded their services to meet the needs of tourists, vacationers, and other long-term visitors in the summer. The Methodist church operated a beach near the corner of Main Street and East Shore Drive, which quickly became one of the lake's most popular bathing spots.<sup>90</sup> In the 1930s, the church delivered hundreds of flyers throughout the community to invite residents and tourists alike to attend services.<sup>91</sup> St. Patrick Catholic Church also offered services for tourists. Although church membership had dropped to only about sixty-eight families in the 1920s, attendance by tourists was so great that in the summer months there were two masses each Sunday.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to tourists, students from the University of Michigan frequently visited Whitmore Lake, perhaps most famously, the University's football team. From 1901 to 1912, Coach Fielding Yost conducted fall conditioning for the football team in the village, where they stayed at the Lake House hotel, swam in the lake, and ran drills in a nearby cow pasture.<sup>93</sup> Fans also took advantage of the hospitality of Whitmore Lake. In the 1910s, the Methodist Episcopal Church hosted fans traveling from home football games at the University for chicken dinners in the new basement kitchen and social hall, a tradition which grew to serve over one hundred dinners each Saturday by the 1920s.<sup>94</sup> St. Patrick Catholic Church also sold luncheon baskets to football fans coming and going from home games in Ann Arbor in the 1930 and 1940s.<sup>95</sup> The relationship between the University and the Township continues today through the mysterious shoe trees near the intersection of Spencer Road and Six Mile Road. Local tradition suggests that seniors from the University celebrate graduation by throwing a pair of shoes into the tree branches.

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<sup>88</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 33-35, 270.

<sup>89</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 269-275.

<sup>90</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 227.

<sup>91</sup> Dempster and Rorabacher, "Whitmore Lake Community Methodist Church History," 15, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Hennings, "From the Marshgrasses."

<sup>93</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 252-255.

<sup>94</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 144.

<sup>95</sup> Hennings, "From the Marshgrasses."

The influx of tourists in the summer months took a toll on the lake itself. After decades of fluctuating water levels that regularly resulted in flooded homes and unsightly beaches, the Works Progress Administration constructed a culvert from Horseshoe Creek to the southeastern end of the lake in 1936, and in the 1950s, the official lake level was set at 895.8 feet above sea level. To combat unrelenting overfishing at Whitmore Lake, the state continued fish stocking programs. Bluegill, largemouth bass, yellow perch were released in the lake from 1934 to 1940, and smallmouth bass were stocked in 1936 and again from 1946 to 1948.<sup>96</sup>

## Residential Growth

The tourism boom in the village began with the arrival of the railroad in the late nineteenth century and expanded as the personal automobile gained popularity in the early twentieth century. Vacation homes began to be constructed along the lake's shoreline.<sup>97</sup> Some replaced businesses that were originally on the east side of Main Street on the lake's western shore, others were built on East Shore Drive along the lake's southern and eastern shores. These residences were constructed as summer homes but have gradually become year-round residences. They exhibit a wide variety of vernacular architectural forms and details, varying greatly in size, massing, and stylistic elements. However, many have been substantially altered and few retain architectural distinction.



*Image 15: Postcard Image of Cottages on East Shore Drive  
[Personal Collection of Wytan Stevens, [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)  
(accessed February 2021).]*

Development away from the lake began to increase in the late nineteenth century as well. Margaret Street was an early unplatted neighborhood, which formed in the 1890s on land formerly part of John Rane's farmstead. The first platted residential development in Whitmore Lake was Pray's Addition. The plat, recorded in 1899, included twenty-two small lots on Elizabeth and Joseph Pray's farm. The lots were laid out on Elizabeth Street, which extends south from East Shore Drive near its intersection with Main Street. By the 1920s, the development was built out with summer cottages, although some of the houses predate the plat's recording. Ann Arbor businessman Walter Mack built a house at 42 East Shore Drive, lot number 22, in 1875, and Ann Arbor farmer George McCormick built a house next door at 36 East Shore Drive, lot number 21, in 1890.<sup>98</sup> Both houses remain extant but have been highly altered.

Horseshoe Lake's shoreline saw similar development, starting with the 1929 Shady Beach Subdivision built on the western shore by the Horseshoe Lake Development Company. Unfortunately, the Great

<sup>96</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 30-32, 34; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 82.

<sup>97</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 74.

<sup>98</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 329-333.

Depression hit soon after the development was laid out, and the Horseshoe Lake Development Company sold the lots for very low prices and even gave some away. The houses built in this development were inexpensive to construct, some amounting to little more than shacks or shanties for temporary and seasonal waterfront use. The Leocadia Subdivision and Horseshoe Lake Subdivision on the southern and northeastern shorelines soon followed and were similar in character.<sup>99</sup>

## Business Growth

The business district on Main Street grew and changed during the early to mid-twentieth century in response to the needs of tourists. In 1917, just south of the Main Street commercial core, Charles Pray's general store was moved from the southeast corner of Main Street and East Shore Drive to make way for Whitmore Lake's first gas station. This building is no longer extant, and a 1998 gas station currently occupies the site. Within the commercial core, a small grocery store was opened in 1917 at 9555



*Image 16: Main Street Business District in the 1940s  
[Personal Collection of Wystan Stevens, www.flickr.com  
(accessed February 2021).]*

Main Street, first operated by the Nixons. In 1939, J.D. Ramsay demolished the William Rane House to build a large commercial building at 9545 Main Street. The building has three storefronts and has housed a number of businesses, most notably Ramsay's Drug Store and Kroger grocery store. These buildings remain extant but have been substantially altered. Steffe Brothers Ford sales and service was built at 9561 Main Street, which was later the Nelsons' gas and service station. This building was demolished for the current building around 1979. The Totsie-Wotsie Restaurant was built at 9567 Main Street in the 1930s and was renamed the Tootsie-Wootsie Restaurant in the 1940s. The original building was replaced with the current building by 1960.<sup>100</sup>

The establishment of ice houses in the late nineteenth century also contributed substantially to the economy and growth of Whitmore Lake. The first was the Spring Lake Ice Company, which was owned by the railroad company. Four storage buildings were constructed at the Grove in the 9300 block of Main Street, and a railroad siding was extended from the tracks to their immediate west. The Spring Lake Ice Company was purchased by John C. Carland of Toledo in 1896, and the buildings were destroyed by fire soon after. Carland renamed the company the Toledo Ice and Coal Company and built a much larger storage building in the 9800 block of Main Street. Another building was constructed adjacent to the ice house as a residence for seasonal employees. The company employed only twenty men in the summer, but as many as 250 in the winter. As a result, many farmers in the area were able to supplement their farm incomes by harvesting ice during the winter months. The Toledo Ice and Coal Company was later named Citizen's Ice Company, and in 1929, the ice house was destroyed in a fire caused by a lightning strike, which also destroyed the adjacent employees' residence.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 330.

<sup>100</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 206, 208, 212; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 145-154.

<sup>101</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 110, 277-282; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 54, 154, 185-187.

A second ice harvesting business owned by William Roper also operated in the village. The ice house was located in the 200 block of East Shore Drive, and therefore lacked the railroad access enjoyed by the Spring Lake Ice Company. It is not clear exactly when the business came into operation, but it continued into the 1930s. After closing, the ice house was removed, although a part of the foundation remains inches under the lawns of the houses built on that location. A third ice company, the Dodge-Lemen Ice House, operated on the north side of the lake in Livingston County.<sup>102</sup>

## Community Services

Community services also expanded as the village grew in the early decades of the twentieth century. The post office had moved from place to place since the 1850s, but when Jay G. Pray became postmaster in 1905, he built a brick post office at 9419 Main Street. A new post office was constructed at 9725 Main Street in 1976, though the earlier building remains extant but altered.<sup>103</sup>

Washtenaw County took over responsibility for local roads in 1893, and state funding became available in 1905, although Washtenaw County did not receive any of these funds until 1914.<sup>104</sup> There were several major roads through the township by that time. The original trail connecting Detroit to Jackson includes present-day North Territorial Road. Eight Mile Road forms the northern boundary of the township and was originally known as Base Line Road because it follows the 1815 path used to survey the Michigan Territory. In 1837, the Flint-Ann Arbor Road was built connecting the two towns, which is now known as Whitmore Lake Road. A plank road connecting Welch's Corners, the intersection of Whitmore Lake Road and North Territorial Road, to Whitmore Lake was widened and graded with gravel in 1910 when it became known as the State Road, and later it became part of the original U.S. Route 23.<sup>105</sup>



*Image 17: Jay G. Pray Outside the Post Office  
[Personal Collection of Jacob Donner (local resident)  
originally from the personal collection of the Pray family.]*

Fire and police protection started to become more formalized during the early twentieth century, although they were not the professionalized organizations in existence today. Fire departments throughout the county formed early in its history, often following a devastating fire, but they were manned by ill-equipped volunteers.<sup>106</sup> Northfield Township relied on the efforts of the community to put out a fire, and sometimes received assistance from the fire department in Ann Arbor. A loosely organized volunteer fire department was established in the village in the early twentieth century, but it was reorganized after a 1943 fire destroyed the Whitmore Lake School and nearly destroyed the fire truck that was kept there.<sup>107</sup> Police protection was originally offered intermittently by an on-call sheriff's deputy. In 1929, this service was expanded to full-time protection by four officers with the Michigan State Residential Police, although it is unclear how long the service was in operation. By the late 1940s, there was a full-time constable in the village.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 281-282; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 185-187.

<sup>103</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 134; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 89-90.

<sup>104</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 52.

<sup>105</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 341; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 82-83.

<sup>106</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 52.

<sup>107</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 95, 346-347; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 133-135.

<sup>108</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 351-352.

## World War II Growth

In spite of the growth in housing, business, and public services during this period, the population remained relatively stable, indicating that most of the growth was due to tourism and seasonal residents. In 1880, the population of Northfield Township was 1,273 people, and in 1930, it was 1,090 people. However, by 1940, the population had increased to 1,707 people, then to 2,848 people a decade later.<sup>109</sup> This growth was due in part to World War II-related manufacturing in Washtenaw County.

The Willow Run Bomber Plant had opened in Ypsilanti in 1942, after the automobile industry had been tapped by the federal government to shift to war production. The Ford Motor Company sent recruiting buses to Kentucky and Tennessee, and as a result, large numbers of workers came to Washtenaw County from Appalachia for these jobs. Although dormitories were built at the plant complex, many workers lived in Northfield Township and Whitmore Lake, taking the train to and from Ypsilanti each day. The plant employed 42,000 men and women at its peak, building B-24 bombers, which were then tested and flown to military bases from the airstrip at the complex. The plant produced a total of 8,685 planes, but following the war, the number of employees dropped to about 600 people and the facility was closed in 1947. Most of the employees who lived in the Whitmore Lake and Horseshoe Lake areas did not remain once the plant had closed.<sup>110</sup>

## Context 3: Changes to Rural Life (1880 to 1945)

### Agriculture

Like the village of Whitmore Lake, rural Northfield Township was also affected by the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s. Railroad transportation reduced the cost and time to ship farm products, offered refrigerated storage of dairy products, and operated on regular, year-round schedules, making it possible for farmers to broaden their reach beyond local or regional markets.<sup>111</sup> Instead of hauling goods to Ann Arbor markets on primitive roads that were often muddy potholes in the summer and ice sheets in the winter, farm products could be shipped directly on the railroad. Depots were located in both Whitmore Lake and the crossroads community of Leland's Corners, known by that time as Emery, though the tracks had been removed from the latter location by 1896.<sup>112</sup>

New technology in the late nineteenth century also had an impact on Northfield Township farms. Steam-powered tractors, riding plows, spring tooth harrows, seed drills, row crop cultivators, forage mowers, twine binders, threshers, and large grain combines all increased efficiency and crop yields while decreasing labor needs. In the early twentieth century, gas-powered tractors and trucks replaced animals and steam, further shifting agriculture to larger operations as smaller ones struggled to compete.<sup>113</sup> The 1880 census recorded about nine percent of Northfield Township farms with 150 acres or more of improved land, and by 1894, this number grew to twelve percent.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 353.

<sup>110</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 80, 85, 166-167; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 334, 336-337.

<sup>111</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 49; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 12, 15.

<sup>112</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 109.

<sup>113</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 100-101, 105; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 14-15

<sup>114</sup> United States Census Bureau, *1880 U.S. Federal Census – Agriculture Schedule*, Microfilm, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Washtenaw County, *Washtenaw County Census, Schedule III: Productions of Agriculture, 1894*, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

As farms continued to become more mechanized, new technologies were often too expensive to be a practical investment for most farmers. In Northfield Township, a small number of farmers maintained the most expensive equipment and helped to work their neighbors' land. The Zeeb and the Maier families, for example, owned threshing machinery, and during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries their threshing crews traveled from farm to farm in the fall cutting and gathering grains into shocks.<sup>115</sup>

The development of these new technologies and an increasing focus on cash crops resulted in distinct geographic preferences for specific crops throughout the state by about 1930. Northfield Township and the surrounding area, however, remained the only areas to continue the generalized farming predominant since settlement. Farmers in this region continued to grow a variety of cash crops like corn, wheat, and hay; fruits and vegetables like apples and potatoes; and kept livestock like dairy cows and sheep.<sup>116</sup> The 1880 agriculture census shows that nearly every farm in Northfield township grew corn, wheat, hay, and potatoes. Over eighty percent of farms had apple orchards and about five percent had peach orchards at that time. There was also diversity among the livestock, with over ninety-three percent of farms with dairy cows producing butter, nearly ninety-two percent of farms with chickens producing eggs, over eighty-one percent of farms with hogs, and over sixty-eight percent of farms with sheep producing wool.<sup>117</sup> The 1894 agriculture census showed similar generalization, with nearly all farms reporting corn, wheat, hay, and potatoes, sixty-seven percent reporting apple orchards, and one or two peach orchards, pear orchards, and vineyards. Livestock showed similar patterns as well, with over ninety-six percent of farms with dairy cows, ninety-eight percent with chickens, over eighty-one percent with hogs, and sixty-two percent with sheep.<sup>118</sup>



*Image 18: Louis Kempf loading milk cans to take to Ann Arbor Dairy in the late 1930s*

*[Personal Collection of Grace Kempf, Northfield Township Historical Society Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.]*

<sup>115</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 100-102.

<sup>116</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 16

<sup>117</sup> United States Census Bureau, *1880 U.S. Federal Census – Agriculture Schedule*.

<sup>118</sup> Washtenaw County, *Washtenaw County Census, Schedule III: Productions of Agriculture, 1894*.



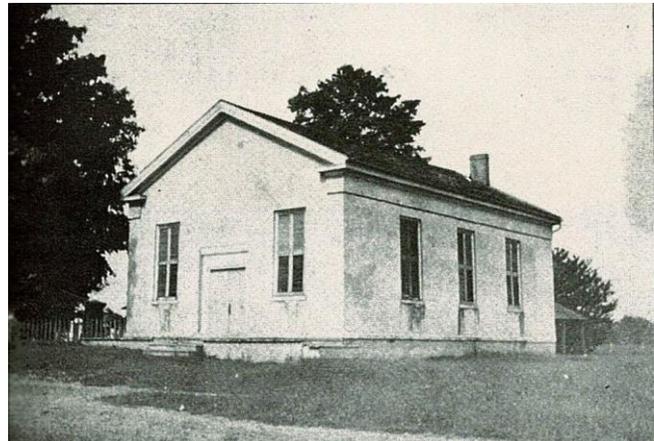
*Image 19: George Zeeb, Jr., and Arthur Zeeb using a Fordson tractor to harvest wheat in 1927 [Personal Collection of Kenneth Zeeb, Northfield Township Historical Society Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.]*

Many farmers were reluctant to accept new technologies. Ford introduced the Fordson tractor in 1917, followed by tractors manufactured by International and John Deere. Although most farmers owned cars and trucks in the early twentieth century, many preferred walking plows pulled by mules rather than gasoline-powered tractors. Electricity and telephones were well established in the village of Whitmore Lake by the time most farms were connected, which for many farms wasn't until the 1920s. This long-standing culture of self-sufficiency served farmers well during the Great Depression. Most were able to grow enough food for their families and their livestock and to barter for other services, like a call to the local doctor.<sup>119</sup>

### Crossroads Communities

Crossroads communities sometimes formed at the intersections of major roads in early Northfield Township. Usually they began with a school or church, which formed the center of community life at that time, and were joined by small inns, blacksmith shops, or general stores that served both travelers and locals alike. Some crossroads communities even offered some measure of public services, such as a post office or cemetery. As urban centers began to form throughout the county, fueled by even larger roads or railroad depots, these crossroads communities stagnated and eventually faded out of existence. Still, evidence of their presence remains visible on the landscape today.

The earliest such crossroads community in Northfield Township was the largely Irish community of Welch's Corners, which formed in the mid-nineteenth century at the intersection of Whitmore Lake Road and North Territorial Road. The Midway Tavern and Welch's Corners School had opened in the 1830s, followed by a blacksmith shop and general store. The community continued to grow with the addition of a gas station and produce stands in the early twentieth century, and the Midway Tavern served as a polling site before it was destroyed by fire in 1961.<sup>120</sup>



*Image 20: First Methodist Church of Northfield (date unknown) [Stevens, Northfield Harvest, 141.]*

Another crossroads community was Leland's Corners, later known as Emery, which was located at the intersection of present-day North

<sup>119</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 104-105.

<sup>120</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 642; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 64, 94-95, 167, 179-180, 191.

Territorial Road and Earhart Road.<sup>121</sup> The area was named for Emory Leland, who owned most of the land and whose house remains extant at 3850 North Territorial Road. When the township's early Methodist congregations merged, they formed the First Methodist Church of Northfield and built a church at this corner in 1847. The congregation also established a cemetery adjacent to the church, known as Leland Cemetery.<sup>122</sup> In the 1880s, a railroad depot was built at Leland's Corners, located at the northwest corner of East Northfield Church Road and Earhart Road. Named Leland Station, trains stopped at least once each day. In 1884, a post office opened near the depot, which was named Emery after Emory Leland who owned most of the land, although the reason for the alteration in spelling is not known. The post office was located inside a general store operated by George and Clara Zeeb, which also housed the local telephone exchange by 1901. The Zeebs also purchased cream from local dairy farmers, then took it by wagon to markets in Ann Arbor. Henry Miller operated a blacksmith shop at the southwest corner of Northfield Church Road and Earhart Road. A brickyard was located just north of the Leland School and the brickyard pond froze in winter and was used for ice harvesting.<sup>123</sup>



Image 21: Excerpt of 1895 Atlas Depicting Leland's Corners/Emery [George A. Dole & Co., Standard Atlas of Washtenaw County, Michigan, including a plat book [...]] (Chicago, IL: George A. Dole & Co., 1895), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.]

At its peak in the 1880s, the crossroads community of Emery boasted a depot, post office, general store, blacksmith, school, church, and cemetery. However, the railroad did not attract enough passengers to remain profitable, and in 1896 the rails were removed from Emery and the depot was torn down by 1915. The post office was decommissioned in 1903 when rural carrier routes were established, although the store continued in operation until it was destroyed by fire in 1972. The Methodist Church, which had been established in 1847, was dissolved in 1915 and the church building at the northeast corner of North Territorial Road and Earhart Road was demolished in the 1930s. The Leland School, built in 1867, remained in operation until 1959 when it was consolidated with Whitmore Lake schools. It is now a private residence.<sup>124</sup>

Steffe's Corners was a rural crossroads community that formed at the intersection of Joy Road and Pontiac Trail. The Sutton School had been operating at that corner since 1828, and in 1922, Abraham and Leah Steffe built a grocery and general store at the corner. The Sutton School had no well at that time, so children from the school would fill pails of water from the store for use at the school. The

<sup>121</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 121.

<sup>122</sup> [Sutton], "Northfield Township," 649-650; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 161-162; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 92.

<sup>123</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 122-123, 126-127; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 89-90.

<sup>124</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 124-125, 127, 129; Dorothy Kapp Shear, *Farm Girl in a Feed Sack Dress: Memories of a 1940s Michigan Family Farm* (Self-Published, 2011), 145-146; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 89-90, 92.

Steffes operated the store until 1945, and it remains standing at 3025 East Joy Road, although it has been highly altered for use as a private residence.<sup>125</sup>

### Growth of the German Community

German settlers continued to arrive in Northfield Township in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and they relied heavily on German-founded community institutions as the centers of their communities. St. John's Lutheran Church, which had been built in 1875, continued to grow through the early twentieth century. New windows and pews were installed in 1914, the church was enlarged and renovated in 1925, and an organ was installed in 1929. The parsonage was also remodeled in 1929. However, the church and its parsonage were both destroyed by fire in March of 1932 and all early records of the church were lost. Within weeks, the congregation had built a new parsonage, followed by a new church building that fall, both of which remain standing today.<sup>126</sup>

The German Park Recreation Club at 5549 Pontiac Trail was another important rural institution in Northfield Township. In the 1920s when many Germans were leaving Europe to come to the United States, German families in Ann Arbor and Northfield Township gathered together at each other's homes or nearby lakesides for picnics, music, and dancing. As tensions increased in Europe during the late 1930s, and with it increasing discrimination against German immigrants in America, the need for community support grew even stronger. As the number of families participating in these events grew, they outgrew hosting in their own homes. A large gathering of what would become the German Park Recreation Club took place in a rented wooded grove southwest of Ann Arbor in 1934, and the event was so successful that in 1938, ten acres of the current park was purchased to continue this tradition of hosting large picnics. Five members of the community donated five dollars each to make the down payment, including Albert Duckek, Tony Vetter, Adolf Vetter, Carl Schamm, and Adolph Gress, and they sold bonds to raise the remaining \$475 needed to buy the property. The first public picnic was held on July 17, 1938, and the club continues to host three public festivals each year with traditional German food, beer, music, and dancing.<sup>127</sup>



Image 22: Advertisement for a German Park public picnic, date unknown

<sup>125</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 130-131; Shear, *Farm Girl in a Feed Sack Dress*, 144-147.

<sup>126</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 147; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 98-101.

<sup>127</sup> Toni Jarvis, "Our History Remembered," *The History of the German Park Recreation Club: Celebrating 75 Years, 1938-2013* (Ann Arbor, MI: German Park Recreation Club, 2013).

## Context 4: The Post-War Era (1945 to 1980)

There were several significant events in Northfield Township following World War II that have had lasting impacts on the character of the township since that time. The village began to shift from a seasonal tourism-based economy to a year-round permanent community, in part because the railroad depot in the village of Whitmore Lake closed in 1950, and in part because personal automobiles made traveling between homes in the village and jobs in other towns possible. Change also came to the rural areas of the township, as farms shifted even further from the family operations of the settlement period and smaller farms were incorporated into larger commercial operations.

### A Lakeside Community

The railroads remained a primary method of transportation and an economic driver in Whitmore Lake into the mid-twentieth century, but change came quickly following World War II. With the rising popularity of personal automobiles by the 1930s, tourists began to drive to Whitmore Lake rather than taking the train. The railroad company considered discontinuing passenger service to the village by the 1940s, but travel related to World War II kept the station open. The depot was closed in 1950 due to dwindling passenger traffic, and in the 1960s, the beaches closed due to insurance concerns, thus ending the railroad tourism era in Whitmore Lake.<sup>128</sup>

The rise in popularity and affordability of personal automobiles also contributed to the decrease in tourism and increase in permanent residency in Whitmore Lake, as people could more easily maintain permanent homes in the village while commuting daily to jobs in Ann Arbor and other nearby towns.

Whitmore Lake's population increased from 1,707 people in 1940 to 2,848 people in 1950 and continued to grow over the following decades, reaching 4,672 people by 1980.<sup>129</sup> Many of the smaller seasonal cottages on the lakeshore were enlarged or replaced by larger houses for full-time occupancy, and waterfront homes with private docks extending into the lake began to fill empty lots and replace businesses on the east side of Main Street. Additional houses were constructed on undeveloped lots, especially along East Shore Drive on the south side of the lake.<sup>130</sup>



*Image 23: Lakeside Residences and Private Docks on the East Side of Main Street*

The Widenmann's Point development in the 500-700 blocks of East Shore Drive and Cedar Street was platted in the 1920s, but construction began in the 1950s and continued through the 1990s.<sup>131</sup> The Roper-Leece Subdivision in the 200-400 blocks of East Shore Drive was also developed during this time. It included nineteen lots platted in 1964, which were largely built out by the 1980s.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 228.

<sup>129</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 353-354.

<sup>130</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 201; Washtenaw County, "MapWashtenaw," Historic Aerials, 1940, 1960, 1966, 1979, 1984, <https://gisappsecure.ewashtenaw.org/mapwashtenaw> (accessed February 2021).

<sup>131</sup> "Widenmann's Point," Plat Book 5, Page 46, March 6, 1925, Washtenaw County Register of Deeds; "MapWashtenaw," Historic Aerials, 1940, 1960, 1966, 1979, 1984.

<sup>132</sup> "Roper-Leece Subdivision," Plat Book 17, Page 21, July 3, 1964, Washtenaw County Register of Deeds; "MapWashtenaw," Historic Aerials, 1940, 1960, 1966, 1979, 1984.

Along with residential construction, the business district began to expand to serve the growing population. Businesses began to extend west along Barker Road between Main Street and the railroad tracks as development along the waterfront was predominantly residential. By the 1970s, Community Pharmacy opened at 148 Barker Road, a grocery store opened at the southwest corner of Barker Road and Main Street, and an addition on the rear of the Halleck House at 9615 Main Street extended west along Barker Road and contained several storefronts. There were also restaurants, professional offices, and construction companies located in this commercial section.<sup>133</sup> The Dodge-Stevens House at 125 Barker Road came under Township ownership. It was vacant for many years but was altered to house the Northfield Township Area Library in the 1980s.<sup>134</sup> Businesses also began to appear south of the original commercial district on Main Street near the school complex, including gas stations, restaurants, and construction companies. In addition to the numerous private docks on the western and southern shorelines, two public marinas also opened on Main Street.<sup>135</sup>

One result of the shift to a permanent, year-round community was the significant expansion of public services and infrastructure in the village during the mid-twentieth century. The school system was reorganized to consolidate smaller rural schools into a larger township-wide district, police and fire protection were formalized, and infrastructure, including roads and sewers, were improved dramatically.



*Image 24: Whitmore Lake Administrative Offices, 8877 Main Street*

The village of Whitmore Lake, like the rest of the township, was originally served by a small country school, which was located at 9129 Main Street. Known as the Whitmore Lake School, this building was destroyed by fire in 1943. A new Whitmore Lake School was constructed just south of the original building at 8877 Main Street. In 1954, the Whitmore Lake Public School District was

formed from the earlier Northfield District through the consolidation of rural schools and addition of a high school. The new high school building was constructed near the Whitmore Lake School in 1957. By 1960, Sutton School, Leland School, Flintoft School, and Welch's Corners School in Northfield township, as well as the Green Oak School in Livingston County, were consolidated into the Whitmore Lake Public Schools. In 1966, the Whitmore Lake School was renamed Spencer Elementary School in honor of James Spencer, the first superintendent of the new district. In 1964, the high school was substantially enlarged, with the original high school building serving as the enlarged building's south wing. Athletic facilities were added in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which remain extant north of the



*Image 25: Whitmore Lake High School, 7430 Whitmore Lake Road*

<sup>133</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 214-215.

<sup>134</sup> Northfield Township Area Library, "Our History," <http://www.ntal.org/our-history.html> (accessed February 2021).

<sup>135</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 214-215.

school complex on Jennings Road. The west wing of the building was constructed in 1977 when the middle school was added, and a small addition was built on the south wing in 1989. Spencer Elementary School was demolished after the current elementary school was built at 1071 Barker Road near downtown in 1991. A new high school was built at 7430 Whitmore Lake Road in 2006. The middle school later closed with those grades were incorporated into the elementary and high school buildings, and the former middle school on Main Street now houses the administration offices and two small private schools.<sup>136</sup>

The fire and police departments also grew following World War II. Following reorganization of the fire department in the wake of the 1943 Whitmore Lake School fire, the township's first fire station at 75 Barker Road was built in 1946. The building was constructed by community volunteers using a variety of donated materials salvaged from other buildings. The front of the building included a garage to house the single pumper truck that the department had at that time, while an apartment at the rear of the building housed the volunteer fire chief.<sup>137</sup> A new pumper truck was added to the station in 1948, followed by a tanker in 1950. More volunteer personnel were needed to operate the new equipment, so the first stipends were offered in the 1960s. In 1969, the Township took over the department and it was officially named the Northfield Township Fire Department. An addition was constructed onto the fire station in the early 1970s, and in 1977, Station No. 2 was built at 2727 East North Territorial Road and equipped with two pumpers, two tankers, three grass fire units, and two rescue units. The current police department was formed in 1985 with one full-time patrolman, a part-time sergeant, and several reserve officers, with county police and sheriffs providing the only evening or weekend services. By that time, the fire station on Barker Road also housed the Township Hall, and the police department was located in the rear addition, which was expanded by 1990. Twenty-four-hour police operations began in 1992, and the department was expanded to eleven full-time officers. The Barker Road fire station was closed in 1999, although the township offices remained until 2001. The building remains extant and is currently used for leased office space and storage.<sup>138</sup> In 2001, a new building, known as the Public Safety Building, was constructed at 8350 Main Street to house the Township Hall, the police department, and the fire department.

Roads changed dramatically in the latter half of the twentieth century as well. The former Route 23 that wound its way through Northfield Township and the village of Whitmore Lake was replaced with a more direct U.S. Highway 23 in 1958. In addition to diverting traffic and tourists away from downtown, the new divided highway also cut across roads that once spanned east-west across the township, including Whitmore Lake Road, Jennings Road, Northfield Church Road, and Five Mile Road. The new highway also cut through the Shady Beach development at Horseshoe Lake, splintering the neighborhood. This was likely a deliberate choice - inhabited largely by Appalachian transplants who came to the area to work at the Willow Run Bomber Plant, the neighborhood had a poor reputation and oral tradition suggests some banks also refused to offer mortgages in the area.<sup>139</sup>

Many sewage tanks were still being emptied directly into the lake in the mid-twentieth century, and eventually the lake was deemed unsafe for swimming. As a result, Northfield Township purchased a sewage plant from the state in 1958, located on Nine Mile Road in Green Oak Township, Livingston County. Construction began on a sewer system on the western and southern sides of the lake, then along the eastern side. By 1980, the system was also completed around Horseshoe Lake and the

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<sup>136</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 191-194; Jennifer DeLisle, email communication with author, July 13, 2021; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 139-144.

<sup>137</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 95, 346-347; Northfield Township, "Fire Department History," [http://www.twp-northfield.org/services\\_and\\_departments/fire\\_department/fire\\_department\\_history.php](http://www.twp-northfield.org/services_and_departments/fire_department/fire_department_history.php).

<sup>138</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 346-348, 351-352; Northfield Township, "Fire Department History"; Jennifer DeLisle (NTHS President), email communication with author, July 16, 2021.

<sup>139</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 336, 344; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 83-84.

northern side of Whitmore Lake, and in 1998 it was expanded further along U.S. Highway 23 and North Territorial Road.<sup>140</sup>

### Decline of Agriculture

Throughout most of the state, early twentieth century improvements in farming methods, transportation, and marketing allowed farms to specialize in products best suited to the local geography, climate, and soils, resulting in the emergence of distinct regional patterns of agriculture in Michigan. However, Northfield Township and the surrounding area continued to practice diverse, general farming into the mid-twentieth century. Farms in this region were ideally placed to easily access not only the major urban markets within the state, but also transportation networks to the large markets and processing facilities of other states. As a result, while most of Michigan was shifting to specialized farming after 1945, Northfield Township farms continued to practice generalized farming, growing a variety of cash crops while also raising livestock, much as they had done since the settlement period in the early nineteenth century.<sup>141</sup>

Although farms remained generalized, there were changes in the popularity of some types of crops and livestock during the mid-twentieth century. Corn, wheat, and hay remained the most common cash crops, while the 137 fruit orchards reported in the 1894 agricultural census had dropped to just fifteen. While nearly every farm in the township raised dairy cows and chickens at the turn of the twentieth century, by the 1950s only about half of Northfield

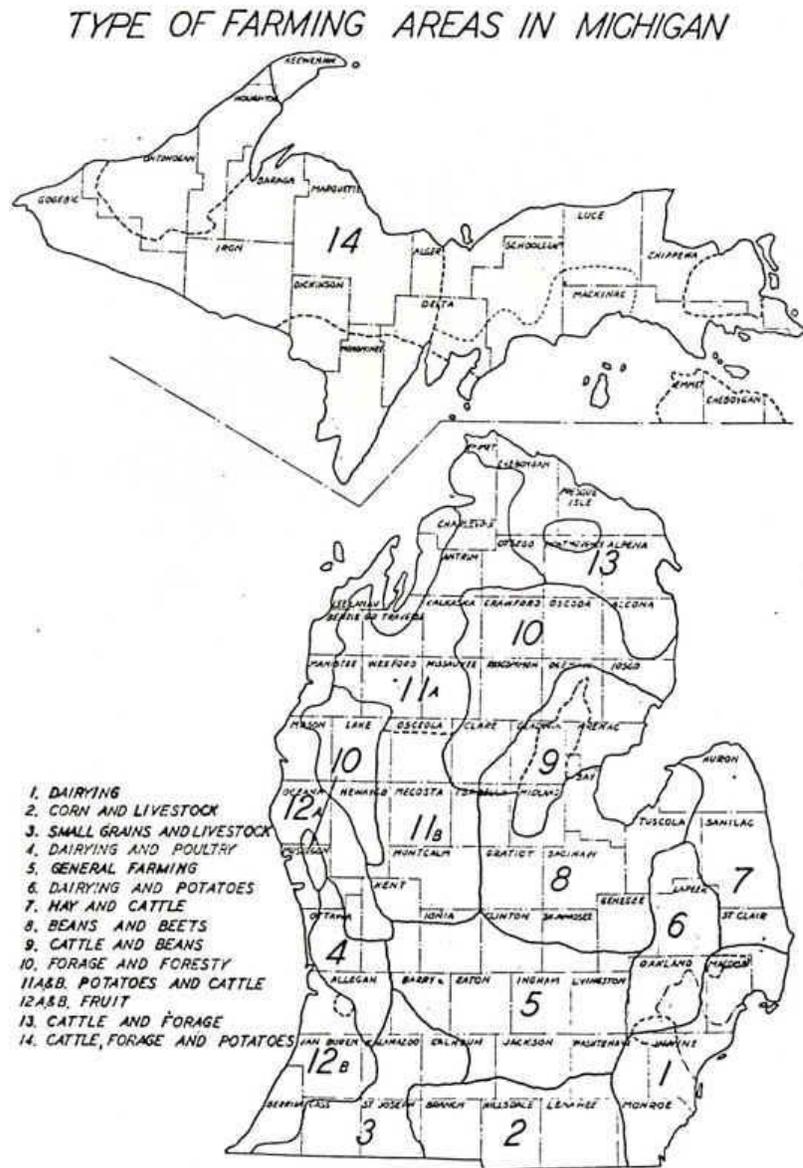


Image 26: Farm Specialization Map  
 [Michigan State University, "Agricultural Regions,"  
[https://project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/ag\\_regions.html](https://project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/ag_regions.html) (accessed  
 February 2021), originally from E.B. Hill, F.T. Riddell, and F.F. Elliot,  
 "Types of farming in Michigan," Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station  
 Special Bulletin, 1930.]

<sup>140</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 344-345; Hennings, *Looking Back*, 84-85.

<sup>141</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 20, 28

Township farms still kept dairy herds. About two-thirds continued to house chickens by 1954, however chickens were not recorded at all in the 1959 agricultural census. Hogs and sheep were also common livestock in the 1894 agricultural census, but hogs were no longer recorded on the agricultural censuses of the 1950s, and only six farms recorded sheep herds by 1950, with sheep not included at all in subsequent census data.<sup>142</sup>

The technology and machinery improvements of the early twentieth century combined with widespread farm electrification continued to widen the production gap between small family farms and larger agribusiness operations in the mid-twentieth century. Although these improvements resulted in greater production on fewer acres and faster cultivation and processing with less manual labor, the expense of purchasing and maintaining the machinery necessary to remain competitive was too great for many smaller farms.<sup>143</sup> As a result, the number of farming operations in the township, and more broadly throughout the county and much of the state, began to drop dramatically. In 1935, there were approximately 3,500 farms operating throughout the county, but that number fell to just 1,400 farms by 1985. In Northfield Township, two hundred farms had been recorded in the 1894 agricultural census, but that number dropped to 145 farms by the 1954 census and only 109 farms by the 1959 census.<sup>144</sup> By 1969, farmers made up less than one percent of the employed people in the county, and that number was cut nearly in half again by 1985.<sup>145</sup>

### ***Conclusion: Northfield Township Today (1980 to present)***

Although the hotels are gone and tourism is no longer the economic base in the village of Whitmore Lake, the lake itself remains an attractive location for fishing and recreation. In the 1970s and 1980s, the lake was known for its tiger muskellunge fisheries. By the 1990s, red-ear sunfish were the most commonly stocked fish in the lake.<sup>146</sup> Today, sunfish, walleye, and blue gill are still stocked by the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and largemouth bass are naturally abundant. Catch-and-release tournaments are common during the summer months, as well as pleasure



*Image 27: Mac's Marina, 9876 Main Street*

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<sup>142</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 110; United States Census Bureau, *1880 U.S. Federal Census – Agriculture Schedule*; United States Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1950*, “Michigan by Counties,” Microfilm, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; United States Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1954*; United States Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1959*.

<sup>143</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 86; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 111; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 15-16.

<sup>144</sup> United States Census Bureau, *1880 U.S. Federal Census – Agriculture Schedule*; United States Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1954*, “Michigan by Counties,” Microfilm, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; United States Census Bureau, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1959*, “Michigan by Counties,” Microfilm, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>145</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 86; Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 111; Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 15-16.

<sup>146</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 34-35.

boating, with marinas and personal docks crowding the shoreline. During the winter months, the frozen lake is utilized for ice skating, ice hockey, ice fishing, snowmobiling, and motocross. The Township government recently acquired twenty-three acres on the lakefront with plans currently underway to develop a public park.<sup>147</sup>

As throughout the township's history, there remains little industry today, and the school district is therefore one of the township's largest employers. The school also serves an important role in local entertainment opportunities, hosting theater events, music concerts, and athletic events, and as an important gathering space for the community, offering space for adult and community education classes, church-sponsored events, and local organization meeting space.<sup>148</sup>

Although family farms remained common through the 1960s, most farms in Northfield Township today are leased to larger companies. Farm machinery continued to evolve through the latter decades of the twentieth century, and equipment continued to grow larger and more expensive. As a result, purchasing and maintaining such equipment generally remained unaffordable and impractical for small farmers. Commercial seed and fertilizer resulted in larger crops that produced greater yield, but this too added to the expense of operating the farm. As a result, more land was needed to grow enough crops in order to remain profitable, therefore the size of farms began to increase, the number of farmers began to decrease, and leasing farmland became common.<sup>149</sup>

Farm products changed in the late twentieth century as government programs aimed to address flooded markets and decreasing farmland acreage. Although large dairy barns are common on the Northfield Township landscape, few, if any, dairy cows are present today. In the 1980s, dairy farming was effectively ended in Northfield Township when most dairy farmers participated in a federal herd



*Image 28: Great Escape Stables  
on Land Originally Part of Curtis-Doty Farm, 8266 Rushton Road*

buyout program intended to prevent overproduction.<sup>150</sup> Horses have replaced dairy herds on the farm landscape today. Corn, hay, wheat, and soybeans remain the top cash crops, and farmers no longer rely on the railroads to get their farm products to market, instead transporting goods by truck to Toledo or other nearby cities.<sup>151</sup> By the late twentieth century, pick-your-own farm products, truck farming, and farming-related businesses like meat packing, milling, fertilizer and feed retail, and even veterinary services, offered new opportunities for former farmers.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Sam Iaquinto (Owner of Mac's Marina), telephone communication with Jennifer DeLisle (NTHS President), July 2021; Jennifer DeLisle (NTHS President), email communication with author, July 13, 2021.

<sup>148</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 194-195.

<sup>149</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 97, 105.

<sup>150</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 86.

<sup>151</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 105, 109.

<sup>152</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 86.

As the twentieth century came to a close, many farmers found it was more profitable to grow houses than crops, and therefore sold their farm fields for housing developments. In 1987, the former grove next to the Zuck House became the site of the Harbor Cove Apartments. Two years later, 131 acres of the Freeman Weber Farm were sold for the Northfield Estates Mobile Home Park on Barker Road. Eagle Gardens subdivision was built on the Adam Reutter Farm in 1992 just south of East Shore Drive. In 1995, the former John Buehler farm at Jennings and Barker Road was sold for Northpointe Estates. The large parcel of farmland at the corner of Whitmore Lake Road and West North Territorial Road, historically associated with the Wheeler-Leland Farm, has been pursued by developers for much of the twenty-first century and is currently under negotiation for a large multi-use development. In more rural areas of the township, farmland has been subdivided into somewhat larger parcels to accommodate new homes, including along North Territorial Road and Sutton Road.<sup>153</sup> Still, there appears to be a resurgence of small-scale agriculture in recent years, with a number of newly established organic and specialized farms now operating in the township.<sup>154</sup>

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the nature of Northfield Township had changed dramatically from the agrarian society of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the tourist-driven economy of the early and mid-twentieth century. The loss of agricultural land remains an ongoing concern for county and local officials, in spite of efforts to preserve existing farmland through tax credit programs like the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act of 1974.<sup>155</sup> Today, the Kapp Farm at 2271 East Northfield Church Road and the Bauer-Rockol Farm at 7688 Sutton Road are the only two full-time family farm operations remaining in the township that still produce soybeans, corn, hay, and wheat, while the once common dairy cows, chickens, sheep, and hogs have disappeared from the landscape.<sup>156</sup> Instead, many of the extant farmsteads have vacant agricultural buildings, fields

leased to larger agricultural companies, and farmhouses that serve as rental properties for absentee owners. Farmland continues to be converted to lakeside and countryside housing developments for commuters seeking homes outside the city. As a result, the character of the township has shifted from a bustling tourist destination surrounded by active family farms to a residential area whose residents utilize the highways to commute to jobs in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and other nearby cities.



*Image 29: Holsteins at the Kapp Farm, 2271 East Northfield Church Road*

<sup>153</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 337.

<sup>154</sup> Jennifer DeLisle (NTHS President), email communication with Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, July 13, 2021.

<sup>155</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 98; Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, "Farmland Preservation," [https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599\\_2558--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599_2558--,00.html) (accessed February 2021).

<sup>156</sup> Lori Maulbetsch (owner at 2271 East Northfield Church Road), personal interview by author, May 2, 2021.

# Architectural Context

## *Property Type 1: Residential Architecture*

### **Descriptive Overview**

The earliest houses in Northfield Township were small log buildings. Upon arrival, settlers typically constructed a modest home using timber cleared from their land in preparation for farming. These logs were sometimes dressed by removing the bark, then hand-hewn into square or partially square shapes, while others were used with the bark left on. Once planks from the sawmills throughout the county became readily available, these rustic log buildings were replaced with frames ones.<sup>157</sup> For this reason, no log buildings are known to remain extant in Northfield Township.

Although the rural and village areas of the township are each distinctive landscapes with different development histories, they both employed popular architectural styles from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. Residential styles include Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch. Vernacular residential buildings are also common, and may feature pared-down elements of popular styles, most often Queen Anne.

Houses in the village of Whitmore Lake are typically located on the shores of Whitmore Lake, including downtown residences on Main Street adjacent to the commercial district or former vacation homes extending along the southern shoreline on East Shore Drive. The earliest residential buildings in the village were typically constructed as part of larger farm complexes, since many of the earliest village residents also farmed. However, most historic outbuildings have been removed and former farmland has long since been sold for village development. Some extant residential buildings remain from the village's heyday as a tourist destination, but most were built in the twentieth century as the village shifted from a seasonal population to a permanent one.

Many of the historic houses that currently dot rural Northfield Township were constructed with a variety of domestic and agricultural outbuildings forming clearly-defined farm complexes. In some cases, the farmhouse remains the dominant building in a farm complex, sometimes with a highly intact complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings. Others retain small outbuildings, such as sheds or chicken houses, but no longer retain the barns or field patterns necessary to convey the character of a nineteenth century farm. In still other cases, the outbuildings have been lost entirely, and the surrounding farmland has also been sold for development.

### **Residential Architecture**

The earliest surviving residences were constructed in the Greek Revival style, which was based on classical Greek architecture, an interest in which was spurred by early nineteenth century archaeological investigations in Greece, empathy for the Greek war for independence (1821-1832), and a waning affection for British styles. The style was popular in Washtenaw County from the 1840s through the 1870s, spread by carpenter's guides and pattern books. Characteristic detailing of the Greek Revival style includes low-pitched gabled forms; flat-roof one- or two-story entry porches with square or round columns; entrances with sidelights, transoms, and Classical surrounds; and bands

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<sup>157</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 325.

of trim or dentil detailing at the cornice, sometimes with partial returns.<sup>158</sup> The Christian Zuck House at 9301 Main Street was completed in 1833 and is the oldest surviving building in Northfield Township. The tripartite house has a two-story main block with one-story shed roof wings on each side. The façade is dominated by a two-story gabled portico with square columns. The entrance is centered on the façade and set in an elaborate surround with square pilasters, and it is flanked by six-over-six windows with paneled wood aprons and decorative cross-topped wood surrounds. The house also retains the original field stone foundation and bark covered floor joists.<sup>159</sup>



Image 30: Christian Zuck House  
(9301 Main Street)

The Curtis-Doty farmhouse at 8275 Rushton Road, which also served as the Gravel Run Post Office from 1850 to 1878, was built in 1842 and is a modest example of the Greek Revival style. The main block of the house is a one-story side-gabled form with a symmetrical façade, six-over-six wood windows, and dentil detailing at the cornice. The entrance is centered on the façade and sheltered by a flat entry porch with square tapered wood columns. A one-story wing extends from the south elevation and features a secondary entrance sheltered by a shed-roof porch, two-over-two wood windows, and dentil detailing at the cornice.



Image 31: Curtis-Doty Farmhouse  
(8275 Rushton Road)

The 1846 Joshua Leland House at 3850 East North Territorial Road is an unusually large, front-gable, two-story example of the Greek Revival style, featuring a symmetrical façade, wide band of trim at the cornice, and wood corner pilasters. The entrance is centered on the façade and is sheltered by a flat-roof entry porch with a wide band of trim at the cornice and wide square wood columns, and a door with wide sidelights is set in a decorative surround with square pilasters. Above the porch, there is an elaborate three-part window set in a decorative surround with square pilasters supporting an entablature.



Image 32: Joshua Leland House  
(3850 East North Territorial Road)

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<sup>158</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 246-264; Susan Wineberg and Patrick McCauley, *Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor Historical Foundation, 2014), 1-2.

<sup>159</sup> Stevens, *Northfield Harvest*, 61.

The 1864 Devereaux Farm at 66425 West Eight Mile Road features a distinctive one-and-a-half-story octagon form with Greek Revival detailing. The entrance features multi-light sidelights with a decorative surround and dentil detailing on the entablature. The door is sheltered by a later gabled porch supported by round columns. The house features six-over-six wood windows at the first floor, three-light wood windows in the frieze band, and an octagonal cupola with three-light wood windows.



*Image 33: Devereaux Farm  
(66425 Eight Mile Road)*

The Italianate style is also present, with low-pitched hipped or gabled forms, sometimes with a cupola; windows with elaborate crowns, often set in arched openings; and widely overhanging eaves with heavy brackets. The style originated in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to the formal ideals of Greek Revival and other classical styles. It spread throughout the United States via influential pattern books published in the 1830s and 1840s. In Michigan, the style often dominates downtown commercial districts, but it was also common in both urban and rural residential architecture from 1850 until 1880.<sup>160</sup> Italianate farmhouses in Northfield Township are typically gable-front-and-wing forms with a two-story front-gable wing and a one-and-one-half or two-story side-gable wing with a full-width porch, and are either frame or brick. The 1875 Kalmbach farmhouse at 385 West Joy Road is a representative brick example of the style in the township, with a two-story gable-front-and-wing form with round windows in the gables, arched two-over-two wood windows with elaborate masonry hoods, and heavy wood brackets under the cornice. The house has a hip-roof porch supported by square wood posts with sawn woodwork, and also retains a stone foundation and interior brick chimney.



*Image 34: Kalmbach Farm  
(385 West Joy Road)*

The Nathan and Sarah Sutton House at 5145 Pontiac Trail is a pared-down interpretation of the Italianate style. This two-and-one-half-story brick example was built in two phases, with the rear wing built around 1864 followed by the front of the house around 1880. The house features small hip-roof porches with dentil detailing on the front and side elevations and a projecting, polygonal bay on the front elevation. The windows are set in arched openings with simplified brick and stone hoods and stone sills. In lieu of the heavy brackets common to the style, the cornice is instead ornamented with a simplified band of trim above fixed, single-light frieze band windows at the upper half story.



*Image 35: Nathan and Sarah Sutton House  
(5145 Pontiac Trail)*

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<sup>160</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 282-302; Wineberg and McCauley, *Historic Ann Arbor*, 4-5.

The 1903 Maier farmhouse at 611 West Northfield Church Road is an example of a pared-down, rural interpretation of the Queen Anne style. Popularized by a group of nineteenth century English architects, the Queen Anne style borrowed heavily from the Medieval models of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, having little to do with the 1702-1714 reign of Queen Anne as the name implies. The style was popular in the United States the late-1800s, spread through pattern books and mail-order house plans, as well as via the expanding railroad network along which pre-cut architectural details were distributed. Balloon framing, which was much lighter than older timber framing, resulted in more asymmetrical, complex houses. The style was popular in Washtenaw County from about 1875 until the 1910s and is characterized by steeply pitched rooflines, patterned shingles, textured wall materials, asymmetrical forms, cut-away bays or bay windows, and elaborate sawn woodwork.<sup>161</sup> The Maier farmhouse is two-and-one-half-stories with a cross-gable form and decorative wood shingles in the gables. It features a characteristic wrap-around porch supported by turned wood posts with sawn brackets and a turned balustrade.



*Image 36: Maier Farm  
(611 West Northfield Church Road)*

Most farmhouses throughout the township are vernacular and feature traditional forms with either no ornamentation or simplified ornamentation of popular styles. These houses are usually two-story side-gable or cross-gable forms, often with one- or two-story rear ells, and usually with partial- or full-width porches. The c.1886 Navroth-Graf farmhouse at 370 West Northfield Church Road with a two-story, front-gable west wing and a small one-story wing extending east. The one-story wing has a full-width shed-roof porch with square wood posts and a matchstick balustrade, which remains in place although the porch has been enclosed with wood-framed screens. The house originally had pared-down Greek Revival detailing, but following damage from a tornado in 1917, the roof was rebuilt and the detailing removed.



*Image 37: Navroth-Graf Farm  
(370 West Northfield Church Road)*

The 1894 O'Brien farmhouse at 2375 East Five Mile Road is a two-story, cross-gable form with pared down Queen Anne detailing. The house has a corner porch supported by turned posts with simple sawn brackets and a turned balustrade and retains two-over-two wood windows, weatherboard siding, a field stone foundation, and an interior brick chimney.



*Image 38: O'Brien House  
(2375 East Five Mile Road)*

<sup>161</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 344-370; Wineberg and McCauley, *Historic Ann Arbor*, 7-8.

By the turn of the twentieth century, architectural trends nationwide had moved away from the elaborate ornamentation of the late-nineteenth-century Romantic Revival styles, shifting instead to the classical detailing of the Colonial Revival style. Although popular nationally from 1880 to 1955, it is an uncommon style in the township. Colonial and Classical architecture were experiencing a nationwide resurgence as part of an eclectic phase of architecture that took inspiration from the American 1876 and 1893 expositions and by the 1910s, drawing on elements of the Federal, Greek Revival, and Dutch Colonial styles. Colonial Revival-style buildings are typically one-, one-and-a-half-, or two-story, side-gabled buildings with small entry porches supported by Classical columns. Entrances are typically ornamented with sidelights or fanlights, pilasters, and decorative surrounds. Windows are usually multi-pane double hung windows, sometimes set in pairs. Dentil detailing, modillions, bands of trim, and other Classical elements are also common.<sup>162</sup> The 1922 Groves farmhouse at 6015 Sutton Road is a two-story, side-gable example of the Colonial Revival-style. The entrance is centered on the symmetrical façade and features a six-panel door and four-light-over-one-panel wood sidelights within a Classical surround with pilasters supporting an entablature. The house also retains eight-over-eight wood windows, weatherboard cladding, and a stone foundation.



*Image 39: Groves Farm  
(6015 Sutton Road)*

Several examples of the Craftsman style are also present in the township. An extension of the Arts and Crafts movement of the early twentieth century, this style was dominant nationally starting around 1905, originating in California. It spread quickly through magazines and pattern books, becoming popular in Washtenaw County until the 1930s. Craftsman-style bungalows offered modern living, unpretentious natural materials, and were inexpensively and easily built. The Craftsman style is characterized by side- or front-gable forms, low-pitched rooflines with widely overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails, decorative knee braces or brackets, double-hung windows with decorative multi-light upper sashes, and porches supported by wood posts on masonry piers.<sup>163</sup> One of the most distinctive examples of the style is the 1923 Gustav Radtke House, a stone bungalow at 574 East Shore Drive. It has a side-gable form and a full-width engaged porch with a combination of stone and wood posts set on stone piers, which was enclosed with one-over-one wood windows in the 1990s. The house has widely overhanging eaves with knee braces, a small rear porch with exposed rafters, and four-over-one wood windows. There is a wide shed-roof dormer on the front elevation with slate cladding, and a wide stone chimney on the west elevation. The house was once part of a large beef cattle farm, and the gambrel-roof livestock barn remains extant south of the house, although in poor condition.



*Image 40: Gustav Radtke House  
(574 East Shore Drive)*

<sup>162</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 408-432; Wineberg and McCauley, *Historic Ann Arbor*, 10-11.

<sup>163</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 566-578; Wineberg and McCauley, *Historic Ann Arbor*, 13-14.

It is not uncommon for a farmstead to include an older house dating to the late nineteenth century along with newer houses dating the early and/or mid-twentieth century, the later houses constructed to house later generations of the farm family. The Zeeb Farm on Earhart Road demonstrates the practice. The oldest house remaining on the Zeeb Farm is a vernacular farmhouse at 5310 Earhart Road, which was not surveyed as part of this project. In 1924, the Craftsman-style house at 5380 Earhart Road in 1924 was constructed. It features a side-gabled form with widely overhanging eaves and a gabled dormer on the façade. The house has replacement siding and windows, but retains a characteristic full-width, engaged porch supported by tapered square wood posts on brick piers.



*Image 41: Arthur Zeeb Farm  
(5380 Earhart Road)*

A third extant house is a Minimal Traditional-style house added to the farm in 1956 at 5370 Earhart Road. The Great Depression and World War II resulted in a period of slow growth, and when construction resumed in the 1950s, smaller houses with restrained ornamentation were typical. Characterized by a very simple rectangular, side- or front-gabled form, flush eaves, and a lack of architectural detail, Minimal Traditional-style houses were a response to the limited resources of the depression and World War II, followed by rapid home building after the war. The Minimal Traditional style was popular nationally from 1935 until the 1950s and is characterized by low-pitch rooflines with flush eaves, traditional side-gabled forms, usually one story, and minimal or no ornamentation.<sup>164</sup> The house has a side-gable form with an asymmetrical façade, flush eaves, and a picture window. The entrance is sheltered by a simple, gabled hood and accessed by concrete steps with wrought iron railings.



*Image 42: Arthur Zeeb Farm  
(Secondary Residence at 5370 Earhart Road)*

The Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm at 1515 and 1519 East Joy Road also includes multiple residences built for different generations of the farm family. The oldest house is a vernacular house constructed at 1515 East Joy Road in 1909, which has a traditional side-gable form, full-width hip-roof porch supported by turned wood posts with sawn wood brackets, and a gabled dormer. In 1964, a



*Image 43: Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm  
(1515 and 1519 East Joy Road)*

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<sup>164</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 586-595.

Ranch-style house was added to the farmstead. Through the mid-twentieth century, housing shifted from the traditional forms and colonial details of the Minimal Traditional style to the streamlined, modern aesthetic of the Ranch house. The Ranch style is characterized by a long, low profile with a low-pitched gable or hip roof, asymmetrical orientation of windows and doors, broad eaves, and picture windows. These wide, low, one-story houses, most often constructed with brick veneers, were attractive to working-class families as a low-maintenance alternative to siding, which required regular repainting. Additionally, the open floor plans with centrally located kitchens represented the family-centered focus of the 1950s house, a direct response to the fragmentation of rooms separated by hallways that earlier house forms provided. The Ranch house also often included an attached garage or carport, supporting an increased trend in automobile ownership nationwide in the decades after World War II.<sup>165</sup> The Ranch house at 1519 East Joy Road features a characteristic low-pitched hip roof, off-center three-light wood slab door, and a three-part picture window. The house also has widely overhanging eaves and an attached garage on the west end.

One of the most distinctive houses in rural Northfield Township is the Macoska House at 8135 Kearney Road. Although the house was built in 1993 and does not meet the fifty-year age requirement to be classified historic, its distinctive architecture merits documentation. The Macoska House design was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian style of the 1930s, which features natural construction materials, a low profile, broad roof overhangs, and walls of windows that offer a connection between indoor and outdoor space, usually with an L-shaped form providing increased privacy. The Macoska House is the only such example in Northfield Township and one of only a few known examples in Washtenaw County.<sup>166</sup>



*Image 44: Macoska House  
(8135 Kearney Road)*

## ***Property Type 2: Domestic and Agricultural Outbuildings***

### **Descriptive Overview**

Northfield Township is notable for the number of farm complexes that remain extant, especially those from the township's early- and mid-nineteenth-century settlement period. Most farms established in the 1830s originally featured log homes built with timber that was cut as the land was cleared of forest for agriculture. These log homes were later replaced with frame buildings as settlers gained prosperity. Northfield Township farm complexes often retain outbuildings that date to the construction of the house, as well as later outbuildings that reflect the continued growth of the farm and evolution of farming techniques. Therefore, extant farm complexes typically have farmhouses dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century with outbuildings that date from the mid-nineteenth century through the late twentieth century. The farm landscape includes fields for cultivated crops, hay meadows, or livestock pasture, often bounded by wooded areas or divided by tree lines; a barn yard, often divided into small holding pens for livestock; and the domestic complex with a yard, gardens, and outbuildings immediately adjacent to the farmhouse.

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<sup>165</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 596-611.

<sup>166</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 646.

Farm complexes began to change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the arrival of the railroads and the availability of new markets, as well as the advent of new farming technologies, including commercial fertilizers and new machinery. Most farms in Northfield Township and the surrounding region remained predominantly generalized farms, with a combination of cash crops, subsistence crops, and livestock, but increased in size. As new machinery allowed greater production with less manual labor, cash crop production increased. Likewise, with the ability to produce more corn and hay, larger herds of livestock could be maintained. Improvements in transportation meant vegetables, fruits, eggs, and dairy products could be stored longer and shipped farther, allowing increases in those farming operations as well. As a result, the farm complex adjusted with more storage buildings, larger barns, and the construction of silos and chicken houses during this period.<sup>167</sup>

Farmsteads included agricultural outbuildings related to housing, storing, and processing crops or livestock, and domestic outbuildings related to the operation of the household. The topography of Northfield Township is generally flat, allowing a relatively regular placement of outbuildings with respect to the farmhouse. Domestic outbuildings are typically arranged closer the farmhouse for ease of use by the farm family, while agricultural outbuildings are located further from the farmhouse. Animal barns in particular are placed on the periphery of the farm complex, and outbuildings used in the care of livestock, such as grain silos or corn cribs, are typically in close proximity to animal barns.

### **Domestic Outbuildings**

Domestic outbuildings are typically small-scale accessory buildings that support the operation of the household and are built within relatively close proximity to the farmhouse. Garages are one of the most common domestic outbuildings in Northfield Township, and along with general-use sheds, which are far less common, are typically located immediately to the rear of the farmhouse to allow easy access. Milk houses are also very common in the study area, usually located between the house and the dairy or attached the dairy barn itself, and often adjacent to a farm driveway. Smokehouses, fruit cellars, and pump houses are also extant in the study area, however very few of these building types have survived as advancements in technology have rendered them each obsolete.

The earliest garages were constructed in the early twentieth century, increasing in frequency as personal automobiles became more common, and they continued to be built throughout the twentieth century. A small number of garages are attached to the farmhouse, and several were converted from earlier agricultural outbuildings in the twentieth century. Garages are usually front- or side-gable buildings located in close proximity to the house, facing a driveway or road. They are typically frame construction, although a small number are concrete block, and they vary in size from functional one-car garages to larger multi-car garages with storage areas to combination garages and farm equipment sheds. The Zeeb Farm at 5380 Earhart Road retains a one-car garage located immediately to the rear (east) of the farmhouse. Likely built around 1924 when the house was completed, the garage has a side-gable form, aluminum siding, a metal rolling door, and four-light wood windows.

The c.1950 garage at the Groves Farm at 6015 Earhart Road is a traditional side-gable form clad with German weatherboard. It features construction methods and architectural details common to the mid-twentieth century, including a poured concrete foundation, a wide ten-light rolling door, and two-over-two horizontal-pane windows.

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<sup>167</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 15-17.



*Image 45: Garage at Arthur Zeeb Farm  
(5380 Earhart Road)*



*Image 46: Garage at Groves Farm  
(6015 Sutton Road)*

The 1950s garage at the McKernan-Dietzel Farm at 1610 West Northfield Church Road, located between the farmhouse and the agricultural outbuildings, serves as both a garage for personal vehicles and as storage for farm equipment. It is a side-gable, three-car garage constructed of concrete block. The garage has metal rolling doors that are oriented north toward one of the farm driveways, and there is an open shed-roof bay on the east elevation that houses farm machinery.



*Image 47: Garage at McKernan-Dietzel Farm  
(1610 West Northfield Church Road)*

Most sheds are large storage buildings that serve an agricultural function with domestic, general-use storage sheds somewhat uncommon throughout the survey area. Those that exist are usually small in scale, located in close proximity to the farmhouse, and date to the early or mid-twentieth century. They are typically frame construction, front- or side-gable buildings with batten doors, no foundation, and small windows. The Kelley Farm at 8310 Main Street retains a representative example of a general-use shed. Located adjacent to the rear of the farmhouse and built around 1900, the shed is a side-gable building with weatherboard cladding, a batten wood door, a standing seam metal roof, and no foundation.



*Image 48: Shed at Kelley Farm  
(8310 Main Street)*

Milk houses, small buildings used to cool and store milk, became common in the early twentieth century to comply with expanding safety regulations for sanitation and temperature regulation. Milk was originally stored in milk rooms inside the dairy barns, however milk could be easily contaminated by barn odors and from contaminants carried into the milk room by walking through the barn. As a result, separate milk houses became commonplace, especially after 1915 when farm books began regularly advocating separate facilities for storing milk.<sup>168</sup> Milk houses are usually constructed of concrete block, which was more sanitary than wood and also aided

<sup>168</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 72; Allen G. Noble and Hubert G.H. Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 109-110.

in keeping milk cool. Some milk houses are connected the livestock barn, though with separate entrances, while others are freestanding buildings located between the barn and the house to allow easy access from each. The Kapp Farm at 2271 East Northfield Church Road retains a representative example of a stand-alone milk house, a small gabled, concrete-block building located between the house and the dairy barn with easy access from one of the farm driveways.

The milk house at the Kalmbach Farm at 385 West Joy Road is an unusual example of a frame milk house in the township. This building is located adjacent to the house and the dairy barn, at the end of a long driveway. According to oral tradition, customers drove wagons, and later cars, directly to the milk house to purchase milk and cream.<sup>169</sup>



*Image 49: Milk House at Kapp Farm  
(2271 East Northfield Church Road)*



*Image 50: Milk House at Kalmbach Farm  
(385 West Joy Road)*

The Kern Farm at 3690 East Northfield Church Road retains a fine example of a milk house attached directly to the dairy barn. The attached milk house is similar to a stand-alone milk house with concrete block construction and a gabled form and features wood shingles in the gable, multi-light metal windows, a one-light wood-framed storm door, and a standing seam metal roof. The dairy barn and milk house are located adjacent to East Northfield Church Road and easily accessible by one of the farm's driveways.

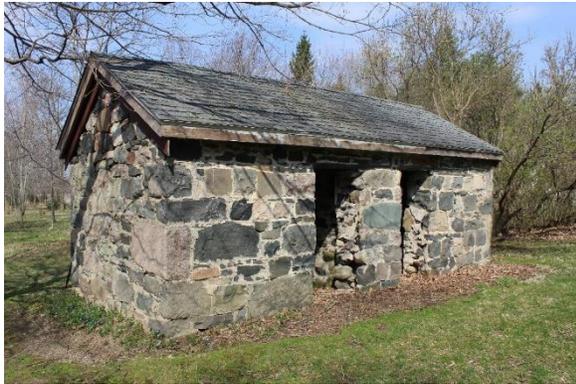


*Image 51: Milk House and Dairy Barn at Kern  
Farm (3690 East Northfield Church Road)*

Prior to widespread refrigeration, smokehouses were necessary for preserving meat. However, as refrigeration and food preservation technologies advanced through the early and mid-twentieth century, smokehouses fell out of use. As a result, few smokehouses remain extant in the study area, although those that do remain are distinctive elements of the farm landscape. Located near the farmhouse, smokehouses in the township are small, gabled, stone buildings with no windows. A distinctive, two-room smokehouse remains extant at the Kennedy Farm at 6905 Sutton Road, while a smaller, one-room, front-gabled example remains at the Kapp Farm at 2271 East Northfield Church Road.

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<sup>169</sup> Elizabeth and Lawrence Cathles (current owners), personal interview by author, March 27, 2021.



*Image 52: Smokehouse at Kennedy Farm  
(6905 Sutton Road)*



*Image 53: Smokehouse at Kapp Farm  
(2271 East Northfield Church Road)*

Pump houses, windmills, and water troughs were common to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century landscape, however, improvements in technology in the mid- and late twentieth century have made these structures obsolete. Although few remain extant in Northfield Township, the Groves Farm at 6015 Sutton Road retains a well-preserved and functional pump house with an adjacent concrete water trough for livestock. The pump house, located between the dairy and horse barns, is a small, side-gable building with a batten door, six-light wood window, and a metal roof.



*Image 54: Pump House and Water Trough at  
Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road)*

Fruit orchards have been present in Northfield Township since its settlement when founder Benjamin Sutton managed an orchard of apple and peach trees. By the late nineteenth century, most farms in the township grew apples and sometimes pears, and in the early twentieth century, apples had become a primary export crop and nearly all farms in the township had fruit orchards. Orchards remain extant in the township today, although they have typically been replanted over time as fruit trees have reached their lifespans. The Wheeler-Leland Farm at 7285 Whitmore Lake Road had a large orchard south of the farmstead. Although the trees were removed in the late twentieth century, an apple cellar – the only known example in the study area – remains extant between the former orchard site and the house. The cellar is a concrete room built into a small hill to keep the fruit cool, with vents in the roof providing ventilation and air flow to prevent the crop from spoiling.



*Image 55: Apple Cellar at Wheeler-Leland Farm  
(7285 Whitmore Lake Road)*

## Agricultural Outbuildings

Agricultural outbuildings are usually medium- or large-scale buildings positioned on the periphery of the farm complex to support agricultural operations. Barns are the most common agricultural outbuilding in Northfield Township, and these large buildings typically housed livestock, most often dairy cows. Corn cribs, silos, and granaries used for storing crops and feeding livestock are often located near the livestock barns. Most farms in the study area raised chickens, and chicken houses are therefore a common element of the landscape. Horses were present on most early farms to pull farm machinery, although few early horse barns remain extant. Equipment sheds, and later pole barns, are commonplace and used to house farm vehicles and machinery.

The defining feature of Northfield Township farmsteads is the livestock barn, which was used for housing cows, horses, hogs, or sheep. Livestock barns are multi-story buildings usually with a gambrel, or less commonly gable, roof form. Wide doors facilitated moving livestock and equipment, and smaller doors provided exterior access to the loft. Most livestock barns in Northfield Township are bank barns, which are built into a hillside allowing access to a lower level on one side and an upper level on the other side, and on-grade barns, which are built with the first floor at ground level, and most were built around the turn of the twentieth century. The oldest known livestock barn in the survey area is the 1846 dairy barn at the Groves Farm at 6015 Earhart Road. An example of a raised barn, which is built on relatively flat topography with an earthen ramp built to access the main floor, the barn has a side-gable roof, a stone foundation, vertical board siding, wide batten doors, and four-light wood windows. The barn framing is primarily hand-hewn and dressed timbers, and wood milking stanchions remains in place in the lower-level milking parlor.<sup>170</sup>

The dairy barn at the Quigley-Grogan-Spencer Farm is more typical of dairy barns in the township. An on-grade example likely built around 1900, the barn features a gambrel roof, stone foundation, wide batten doors, and four-over-four wood windows. The barn is located on the periphery of the farm complex, adjacent to the cultivated fields, and is separated from the farmhouse by the milk house.



Image 56: Dairy Barn at Groves Farm  
(6015 Sutton Road)



Image 57: Dairy Barn at Quigley-Grogan-Spencer  
Farm (8350 Spencer Road)

<sup>170</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 52-58; Noble and Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest*, 99-108.

Likely the largest extant livestock barn is the 1903 dairy barn at the Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm at 1515 East Joy Road. The barn is an at-grade example with a cross-gambrel form and wide sliding batten doors accessed by a low earthen ramp, a stone foundation, and four-light wood windows.

Silos are tall, upright cylindrical structures used to store silage for livestock. Silos are often attached to livestock barns, especially dairy barns, allowing easy access to silage given to calm cows during milking. The most distinctive silo remaining extant in the township is the early twentieth century silo at the Wooster Farm at 7801 Earhart Road, which is the only structural clay tile example in the survey area. The silo was located adjacent to the dairy barn, which is no longer extant. More typical are early and mid-twentieth century conical silos built of concrete block with a metal or asphalt roof, such as the 1960s cement-stave silo at the Wheeler-Leland Farm at 7285 Whitmore Lake Road, which is located adjacent to the dairy and livestock barns.<sup>171</sup>

Horses were needed on early farms in the region to help pull farm machinery and to transport people and supplies. Sometimes horses were housed in dairy barns, but separate barns are common to larger farmsteads. Without direct knowledge of building use, horse barns are difficult to distinguish from other livestock barns, but they are typically medium-sized barns located adjacent to dairy or other livestock barns, equipment sheds, or pastures. The Groves Farm at 6015 Sutton Road retains a large horse barn built around 1850. Located adjacent to the dairy barn, the horse barn is a gabled, frame building with a stone foundation, vertical board siding, batten doors, and wood brackets under the cornice, likely added later.

Although early farmers in Northfield Township often kept hogs and sheep, few hog or sheep barns have survived. These were typically medium-sized barns with gable- or gambrel-roof forms, usually without an adjacent silo, and like horse barns, they can be difficult to identify without direct knowledge of their use. Hog barns were usually frame, but the lower half of the walls were often reinforced with stone or concrete block. The only known hog barn in the survey area is at the Kempf Farm at 651 East Joy Road. The building is in deteriorating condition, but is a medium-sized, frame, gambrel-roof barn with stone and concrete reinforcement on the lower half



Image 58: Dairy Barn at Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm (1515 East Joy Road)



Image 59: Silos

Left: Structural Clay Tile Silo at Wooster Farm (7801 Earhart Road)

Right: Concrete Silo at Wheeler-Leland Farm (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)



Image 60: Horse Barn at Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road)

<sup>171</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 58-62; Noble and Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest*, 108-109.

of the walls. This barn housed hogs in the early and mid-twentieth century and then was converted for use as a sheep and goat barn in the late twentieth century.



*Image 61: Hog Barn at Kempf Farm (651 East Joy Road)*

The Groves Farm retains a sheep barn, which was constructed around 1850 and converted to a horse barn in the twentieth century. The barn has a stone foundation, vertical board cladding, a gambrel roof, and wide batten doors.



*Image 62: Sheep Barn at Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road)*

Chicken houses or coops are also common on Northfield Township farmsteads, housing the hens and roosters kept for meat and eggs. Originally, farms did not include a specialized building for housing chickens, who instead found space to roost in trees or hay lofts. However, chicken houses became common in the early twentieth century when eggs became a popular and marketable product.<sup>172</sup> These are typically small, one-story, shed-roof outbuildings with windows on the south elevation to provide maximum heat and light, especially during the cold winter months. Openings near the base of the building provided access for the animals to an attached holding pen. The Naylor-Bloom Farm was a substantial chicken operation in the early and mid-twentieth century and retains the two largest chicken houses in the survey area. The oldest was constructed around 1900 and features a two-story wing on the east end that may have served as a brooder house for raising chicks. A long, one-story wing with a shed roof extends west and contains large four-over-four wood windows on the south elevation.



*Image 63: Chicken House at Naylor-Bloom Farm (6115 Dixboro Road)*

The chicken houses at the William and Catherine Folts Farm at 7685 Kearney Road and the Navroth-Graf Farm at 370 West Northfield Church Road are more representative examples of those found in Northfield Township. The Folts farm chicken house is a small, frame, shed-roof building with three four-

<sup>172</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 69-70.

light windows with a bank of four single-light windows above them on what was originally the south elevation. The chicken house has been moved slightly and reoriented to face east. The Navroth-Graf Farm chicken house has an asymmetrical gable with a bank of four-light wood windows on the south elevation and wood shingle cladding.



*Image 64: Chicken Houses*

*Left: Chicken House at William and Catherine Folts Farm (7685 Kearney Road)*

*Right: Chicken House at Navroth-Graf Farm (370 West Northfield Church Road)*

Other agricultural outbuildings were related to the processing and storage of crops. As livestock herds grew larger in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, farms needed to store increasing amounts of corn as livestock feed. Corn cribs for storing ear corn became a necessary element of the farm landscape and remain common in the study area. They are usually small, gabled buildings built with a pier foundation and widely-spaced slats to maximize air flow in order to dry the corn, prevent molding, and protect the corn from pests. Most are single, slant-sided cribs with tapered walls, although double cribs are not uncommon. Corn cribs were usually located between the domestic outbuildings and the other agricultural outbuildings, allowing easy access from the fields during the harvest, as well as from the house when corn was needed for grinding into meal.<sup>173</sup> The Devereaux Farm at 66425 West Eight Mile Road and the Kern Farm at 3690 East Northfield Church Road both retain well-preserved examples of slant-sided cribs. The Devereaux crib is a gabled example, located between the farmhouse and the dairy barn site (no longer extant). The Kern crib is a gambrel-roof example located on the periphery of the farmstead adjacent to the agricultural fields.



*Image 65: Corn Crib at Devereaux Farm  
(66425 West Eight Mile Road)*



*Image 66: Corn Crib at Kern Farm  
(3690 East Northfield Church Road)*

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<sup>173</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 63-66; Noble and Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest*, 170-176.

Perhaps the most unusual corn crib in the township is at the Rauschenberger-Paul Farm at 7045 Nollar Road. The corn crib appears to have been built to house livestock, likely sheep or hogs, and later converted for use as a corn crib. The barn was raised onto a pier foundation and re-clad with widely spaced slats in 1961.<sup>174</sup>



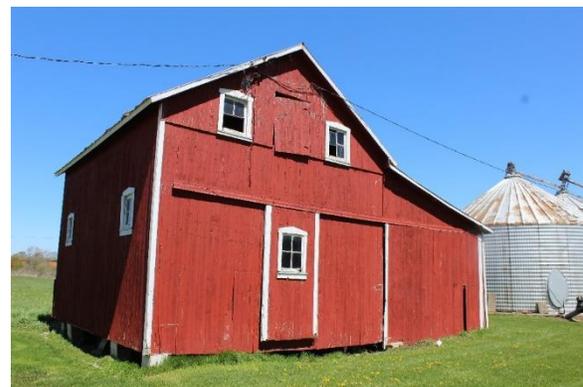
*Image 67: Corn Crib at Rauschenberger-Paul Farm (7045 Nollar Road)*

In the mid-nineteenth century, advancements in combine technology resulted in a shift from storing ear corn to storing kernel corn. Frame corn cribs were ill-suited to store kernel corn, and as a result, were replaced with cylindrical metal grain bins, which remain common on the rural landscape in Northfield Township.<sup>175</sup>

Granaries are also common the study area, generally dating to the early twentieth century. Usually used to store corn or wheat still on the stalks, granaries are typically frame gabled buildings elevated on pier foundations.<sup>176</sup> The granary at the Zeeb Farm at 5380 Earhart Road is a front-gable building with a shed-roof wing on the east elevation. The granary has vertical board cladding, batten sliding doors, and four-light wood windows, and it is located adjacent to two late twentieth century grain bins.



*Image 68: Grain Bins at Kapp Farm (2271 East Northfield Church Road)*



*Image 69: Granary at Arthur Zeeb Farm (5370 & 5380 Earhart Road)*

Equipment sheds are common on Northfield Township farmsteads and are usually long, one-story buildings with shed or gabled roofs, and may have wide sliding doors or several open or partially open bays to facilitate moving large farm equipment in and out of the building. The Wooster Farm at 7801 Earhart Road retains a long, asymmetrical-gabled equipment shed with wide batten sliding doors. The Kern Farm has a similar equipment shed with a side-gabled form, wide batten sliding doors, and shed-roof wing on the rear elevation.

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<sup>174</sup> Steve Pickard (current owner), personal interview by author, March 31, 2021.

<sup>175</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 67.

<sup>176</sup> Michigan Agricultural Heritage Project, *The Agricultural Landscape of Michigan*, 66-67.



*Image 70: Equipment Sheds*  
 Left: Equipment Shed at Wooster Farm (7801 Earhart Road)  
 Right: Equipment Shed at Kern Farm (3690 East Northfield Church Road)

The largest farm operations in the township required the most – and most expensive – equipment. As a result, these farms often include maintenance shops to keep the equipment in good working order. The Wheeler-Leland Farm at 7285 Whitmore Lake Road retains a 1930 maintenance shop with a front-gabled form, later rolling metal door that likely replaced an earlier sliding batten door, a small shed-roof side wing, and weatherboard siding.



*Image 71: Maintenance Shop at Wheeler-Leland Farm (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)*

Pole barns became common after the 1950s as an option for storing hay or machinery and equipment that was less expensive to build and maintain than frame barns. Pole barns have metal or wood framing, metal sheets for cladding and roofing, and wide metal sliding doors.<sup>177</sup> A large, barrel-roof pole barn at the Kapp Farm at 2271 East Northfield Church Road is used for hay storage, while two pole barns at the Zeeb Farm at 5380 Earhart Road are likely used for equipment storage.



*Image 72: Pole Barns*  
 Left: Pole Barn at Kapp Farm (2271 East Northfield Church Road)  
 Right: Pole Barn at Arthur Zeeb Farm (5370 & 5380 Earhart Road)

<sup>177</sup> Noble and Wilhelm, *Barns of the Midwest*, 105, 108.

## Farm Complexes

A small number of farm complexes in the study area retain farmhouses that are largely unaltered and a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings. The oldest intact farm complex is the Groves Farm at 6015 Sutton Road, which includes a 1922 Colonial Revival-style farmhouse and c.1950 garage on the west side of Sutton Road, with a group of well-preserved mid-nineteenth-century agricultural and domestic outbuildings on the east side of Sutton Road. The farmstead retains a dairy barn, sheep barn, horse barn, corn crib/small animal house, and pump house.



*Image 73: Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road)*

*Top Left: 1922 Groves Farmhouse*

*Top Right: Garage*

*Middle Left: Barn Complex*

*Middle Right: Barn Complex*

*Bottom Left: Sheep Barn, Dairy Barn, and Corn Crib/Small Animal Barn*

*Bottom Right: Pump House and Horse Barn*

Another highly intact farmstead is the Zeeb Farm on Earhart Road. The oldest extant farmhouse associated with the farm is located at 5310 Earhart Road, but it was not included as part of this survey. As the family grew and new generations took on responsibilities at the farm, they built a Craftsman-style house at 5380 Earhart Road at the north end of the farm in 1924, followed by a Minimal Traditional-style house at 5370 Earhart Road in 1956. The farm also retains an original garage, large dairy barn, milk house, silos, a granary, an equipment shed and corn crib, and pole barns.



*Image 74: George and Arthur Zeeb Farms (5310, 5370, 5380 Earhart Road)  
 Top Left: The 1924 and 1956 Farmhouses (5370 & 5380 Earhart Road)  
 Top Right: 1894 Farmhouse (5310 Earhart Road)  
 Middle Left: Dairy Barn, Milk House, and 1924 Farmhouse  
 Middle Left: Granary and Grain Bins  
 Middle Right: Granary, Corn Crib & Equipment Shed, Pole Barn, and Garage  
 Bottom Left: Pole Barns  
 Bottom Right: Granary and Grain Bins*

Perhaps the largest extant farmstead in the township is the Wheeler-Leland Farm at 7285 Whitmore Lake Road. The farmhouse likely dates to the late nineteenth century and features a gable-front-and-wing form with two-over-two wood windows and elaborate sawnwork on the porch and cornice. A 1960 ranch house was added to the farm at 85 West Five Mile Road, and the farm retains livestock barns, silos, equipment sheds, hay barns, an apple cellar, a chicken house, and a maintenance shed, as well as large parcels of cultivated fields that are leased to local farmers.



*Image 75: Wheeler-Leland Farm (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)  
 Top Left: c.1875 Wheeler-Leland Farmhouse  
 Top Right: 1960 House (85 West Five Mile Road)  
 Middle Left: Farm Complex  
 Middle Right: Chicken House and Maintenance Shop  
 Bottom Left: Livestock Barn, Dairy Barn, and Silos  
 Bottom Right: Hay Barn and Equipment Sheds*

The Kapp Farm at 2271 East Northfield Church Road is not only one of the most intact farm complexes in the township, but also one of only two full-time farms remaining in operation in the township growing the corn, hay, wheat, and soybean crops that once dominated the study area. The farm retains the 1865 Greek Revival-style house and a large complex of livestock barns, a milk house, a corn crib, equipment sheds, grain bins, and pole barns.



*Image 76: Kapp Farm at (2271 East Northfield Church Road)  
Top Left: Kapp Farmhouse  
Top Right: Dairy Barn, Milk House, and Livestock Barn  
Middle Left: Corn Crib  
Middle Right: Farm Complex  
Bottom Left: Equipment Shed  
Bottom Right: Grain Bins and Equipment Shed*

## Property Type 3: Churches and Church Complexes

### Descriptive Overview

Throughout Northfield Township's history, churches have served as the centers of community life, often providing not only religious services, but also community meeting spaces and political forums.<sup>178</sup> Church life was particularly important for newcomers to the township, who relied on one another for support and assistance as they built homes and livelihoods, and this was especially true for Irish and German immigrants who often faced discrimination. Northfield Township churches began as rectangular buildings but have large rear additions that reflect the continued growth of the congregation over time. Most churches are part of larger complexes that may include a rectory, cemetery, or social hall, oriented in close proximity to each other to easily provide a multitude of services to the congregation and community.

### Religious Architecture

The oldest extant church in Northfield Township is the Wesley United Methodist Church, which was built 1867-1868 at 9318 Main Street. The church features elements of the Greek Revival style, including a pedimented front gable, multi-light transom over the front doors, and square corner pilasters. The front entrance is centered on the façade and features paneled wood doors with an entablature inscribed with "Wesley United Methodist Church." The front and side elevations feature tall, narrow stained-glass windows, and there is a three-part bell tower. A basement was dug in 1908, a large, side-gabled addition was built at the southeast corner of the building in 1957, and a second addition was constructed on the northeast corner in 1980.



Image 77: Wesley United Methodist Church  
(9318 Main Street)

The St. Patrick Catholic Church complex includes the 1878 sanctuary at 5731 Whitmore Lake Road, the 1890 rectory adjacent to the church, a cemetery on the east side of Whitmore Lake Road, and the 1978 Parish Center at 5671 Whitmore Lake Road. St. Patrick is the oldest congregation in the township, formed in the late 1820s when Irish-Catholic settlers began to arrive in the region. The brick sanctuary is a fine example of the Gothic Revival style common to late-nineteenth-century religious architecture. The Gothic Revival style is characterized by steeply-pitched rooflines often with finials, pointed arch windows often with tracery, trefoil or quatrefoil motifs, crenellated parapets, buttresses, and decorative masonry.<sup>179</sup> The church sanctuary features a tall, square central tower with a tall, narrow steeple, finials, and buttresses. The tower projects slightly from the building at the lower level and contains the entrance, which is set in a pointed arch opening with quatrefoil windows above the double doors. A decorative brick lintel over the entrance projects slightly with buttresses and fleur-de-lis ornamentation. The front and side elevations feature tall, narrow stained-glass windows set in pointed arch openings with tracery, brick lintels, and stone sills, as well as brick detailing at the cornice and buttresses separating the bays.

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<sup>178</sup> Bordin, *Washtenaw County*, 43.

<sup>179</sup> John C. Poppeliers and S. Allen Chambers, Jr., *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 46-53.

The 1890 rectory for St. Patrick Catholic Church at 5731 Whitmore Lake Road is an eclectic building. The two-and-one-half-story brick house with exterior end chimneys, a field stone foundation, and a stone water table. The house features Greek Revival detailing, including a symmetrical façade with a central door flanked by sidelights and topped with a multi-light transom. The door is sheltered by a flat-roof porch with dentil detailing at the cornice supported by square wood columns and pilasters. A balcony at the porch roof has a heavy square and turned balustrade. Nine-over-one wood windows are set in arched surrounds. A 1917 tornado destroyed the roof of the house, which was rebuilt with Craftsman detailing common to that time period, including a hipped form, hipped dormer with four nine-light windows, and exposed rafter tails.

The complex also includes a Parish Center built in 1978 and partially rebuilt in 1980 following a devastating tornado. This building, located across the road from the sanctuary on the southwest corner of Whitmore Lake Road and West Northfield Church Road, is one-story with a gable-on-hip form. It has a textured stone veneer and features Modernist detailing, including tall, narrow fixed windows with stone lintels and aprons and a recessed entry with stone veneer walls extending out from the building to frame the entrance.



*Image 78: St. Patrick Catholic Church Complex (5731 Whitmore Lake Road)  
Top Left: St. Patrick Catholic Church  
Top Right: St. Patrick Catholic Church Rectory  
Bottom Left: Church, Rectory, and Garage  
Bottom Right: St. Patrick Catholic Church Parish Center*

The first St. John's Lutheran Church and rectory at 2945 East Northfield Church Road were completed in 1875 but destroyed by fire in 1932 and rebuilt later that year. The sanctuary is a brick, front-gabled, Gothic Revival-style building with a stone foundation and square bell tower at the southeast corner. The entrance, set in a small, front-gabled entry bay, features paired wood doors with a pointed arch, leaded-glass transom set in a cast-stone surround and framed by brick and stone buttresses. A stained-glass rose window is above the entrance bay, and the gables feature cast-stone cross-motif finials. The three-story bell tower has a crenellated parapet and pointed arch openings at the upper level, with double-hung leaded-glass windows with stone lintels and sills at the lower levels. The side elevations of the sanctuary feature large, pointed arch stained-glass windows with tracery, brick lintels, and cast-stone sills. An elevator entrance was added to the east elevation in 1995.

The rectory was built in the Craftsman style, popular at that time, and is a one-and-one-half-story, brick house with a side-gabled form and large gabled dormers on the front (south) and rear elevations. The full-width engaged porch is supported by brick piers with cast-stone caps on brick cheek walls between columns and cheek walls flanking the concrete steps.



*Image 79: St. John's Lutheran Church Complex (2945 East Northfield Church Road)*

*Top Left: St. John's Lutheran Church*

*Top Right: St. John's Lutheran Church Rectory*

*Bottom Left: St. John's Lutheran Church Complex*

*Bottom Right: St. John's Lutheran Church Cemetery, Sanctuary, and Rectory*

## Property Type 4: Cemeteries

### Descriptive Overview

While the earliest cemeteries in Northfield Township were family cemeteries located on individual family farms, few are known to exist. The need for burial grounds was almost immediate upon settlement of new areas, and these earliest burial grounds were typically utilitarian and unmaintained, with graves usually unmarked, making them difficult to identify today.<sup>180</sup>

Northfield Township's largest historic cemeteries began as churchyard cemeteries. As communities began to develop and become more stable and churches were established as community centers, formal, planned cemeteries became more common. These picturesque landscapes were established out of necessity, but later followed principles of the Rural Cemetery Movement with tidy rows of graves, paths wide enough for a wagon or carriage, and were planted with popular, willow, and cedar trees. Graves are traditionally oriented east to west, with the head facing east. Grave markers include headstone and footstone, pedestal-tomb, obelisk, box-tomb, and ledger types, which display common funerary art including lamb, draped cloth, willow, urns, clasped hands, doves, crosses, and bibles. Grave markers are primarily made of limestone, granite, or marble and are arranged in a combination of individual burials with their own markers, family plots with a central family stone surrounded by individual graves, and obelisks or pedestal-tombs with several family members memorialized.<sup>181</sup>

### Northfield Township Cemeteries

Family cemeteries are uncommon in Northfield Township, with only two known to exist, likely due to the early presence of active church congregations that managed their own large cemeteries. The Nelson Family Cemetery near the corner of Main Street and Jennings Road has been disturbed with the removal of the headstones, although the graves remain in place.<sup>182</sup> The Matthews Family Cemetery in the 4600 block of East Joy Road, the oldest cemetery in the study area, includes a die, base, and cap family monument inscribed with the names, birth and death dates, and familial relationships of the interred, with a row of footstones inscribed with the initials of the interred to mark the individual graves.



Image 80: Matthews Family Cemetery  
(4600 block of East Joy Road)

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<sup>180</sup> Gregg G. King, et. al., *Michigan Historic Cemeteries Preservation Guide* (Canton, MI: Charter Township of Canton, 2004), 27-30, 38, 74-78.

<sup>181</sup> Gregg G. King, et. al., *Michigan Historic Cemeteries Preservation Guide* (Canton, MI: Charter Township of Canton, 2004), 27-30, 38, 74-78.

<sup>182</sup> Jennifer DeLisle and Jacob Donner (members of the Northfield Township Historical Society), email communication with the author, May 17, 2021.

The St. Patrick Catholic Church Cemetery was established in the late 1830s and contains over 880 graves, with the oldest known graves dating to the late 1830s and early 1940s, and burials continue to the present day. Located west of the sanctuary across Whitmore Lake Road, a metal archway with the letters “R.I.P.” marks the entrance to the cemetery, along with a metal gate, although there is no perimeter fence. A road encircles the cemetery- off of Whitmore Lake Road and the landscape is hilly and slopes toward the northeast with sparse mature trees, including cedar, and ornamental shrubs planted at some graves. The north end of the cemetery features a veterans memorial and an unborn children memorial.

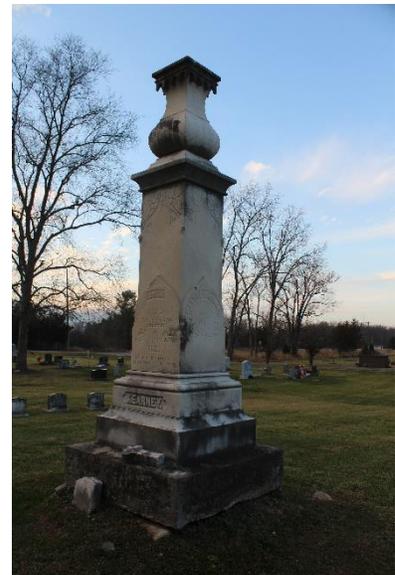


Image 81: St. Patrick Catholic Church Cemetery (5731 Whitmore Lake Road)  
 Top Left: Cemetery Gates  
 Top Right: Family Plot with Die, Base, & Cap Family Monument,  
 Die in Socket Individual Monuments, and Wrought Iron Fence  
 Bottom Left: Ledger Monument with Weeping Willow and Cross Symbols  
 Bottom Middle: Government Issue Monument for Civil War Veteran  
 Bottom Right: Die, Base, and Cap Monument with Urn Symbol

St. John's Lutheran Church Cemetery was laid out just west of the church sanctuary at 2945 East Northfield Church Road. The cemetery contains nearly 400 graves and known burials date from the 1870s to the present day. The cemetery is enclosed with a wrought iron fence with field stone piers with cast-stone caps at the gates, which provide access to wide pathways extending north-south across the cemetery, with one path across the middle of the cemetery and a second across the east end the cemetery. The landscape is relatively flat with sparse mature trees, including cedar, and ornamental shrubs planted at some graves.



*Image 82: St. John's Lutheran Church Cemetery (2945 East Northfield Church Road)*

*Top Left: Cemetery Landscape*

*Top Right: Family Plot with Die, Base, & Cap Family Monument and Raised Top Individual Monuments*

*Bottom Left: Pedestal Tomb with Crown Symbol*

*Bottom Middle: Die in Socket Monument with Angel Symbol*

*Bottom Right: Pedestal Tomb with Urn Symbol*

The Leland Cemetery at the northeast corner of Earhart Road and East North Territorial Road was historically associated with the First United Methodist Church, originally located to its immediate south. The congregation was dissolved in 1915 and the church is no longer extant, but the cemetery remains as one of the last surviving landmarks of the former Leland's Corners community. The cemetery contains approximately 570 graves, and although some records indicate graves date as early 1818, this predates the settlement of the township. The cause of this discrepancy is not clear, although it is possible that there are monuments to family members buried elsewhere or that there was a family cemetery in this location prior to the establishment of the church. Most of the early graves date to the late 1840s, when the associated church was constructed, and burials continue through the present day. A metal archway with the words "Leland Cemetery" forms an entrance to the cemetery and there is a chain link perimeter fence and gate. The landscape is relatively flat with sparse mature trees, including cedar, and ornamental shrubs planted at some graves. This cemetery also includes a small, front-gable, stone gravehouse, the only example included in the survey.



*Image 83: Leland Cemetery (4000 East North Territorial Road)  
 Top Left: Cemetery Landscape and Entry Gate  
 Top Right: Stone Gravehouse  
 Bottom Left: Limestone Headstone with Weeping Willow Symbol  
 Bottom Middle: Pedestal Tomb with Lamb Symbol  
 Bottom Right: Die, Base, & Cap Monument with Draped Urn Symbol*

## ***Property Type 5: Civic and Recreational Buildings***

### **Descriptive Overview**

Few intact, historic civic and recreational resources remain in Northfield Township, most civic buildings in the township, such as schools, town halls, and fire stations, having been built within the last fifty years. The high school and elementary school buildings are both less than fifty years old, and although several historic rural schools remain extant, they have been highly altered. The former middle school is a mid-twentieth century building that was not included in this survey, but may merit further research and documentation. The current town hall, police station, and fire department headquarters building on Main Street, locally known as the Public Safety Building, and the fire station on East North Territorial Road have both been built within the last fifty years. The only historic civic building remaining extant and intact is the former fire department building on Barker Road in downtown Whitmore Lake.

Although tourism was the economic driver in Whitmore Lake during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, little evidence of this recreational past remains on the village landscape today. The hotels, dance halls, and other tourism-related buildings have been lost. The most intact recreational complex remaining in the township is the German Park Recreation Club, located in the rural southeastern section of the township on Pontiac Trail.

### **Civic Buildings**

The most intact institutional building remaining in the township is the former fire department building at 75 Barker Road in downtown Whitmore Lake. This large, rectangular, concrete block building is an example of vernacular minimalist architecture. The station has a barrel roof form and was built by community volunteers. There are two truck bays on the façade with rolling doors, with the main entrance at the northeast corner. The building retains ten-light and fifteen-light metal windows. The upper floor was used as meeting space, and a frame apartment attached to the rear of the fire station is one-story, cross-gabled building with sliding windows, a slab foundation, and a combination of vinyl and aluminum siding.



*Image 84: Northfield Township Fire Department (75 Barker Road)*

## Recreational Complexes

The German Park Recreation Club at 5549 Pontiac Trail is the most intact recreational complex in Northfield Township. Located on ten acres in rural Northfield Township, the park includes buildings that support the club member activities and public events. A large clubhouse with a kitchen, bar, and meeting space at the lower level and a dance hall for public events at the upper level, an original 1930s dance hall that now serves as a picnic shelter, a beverage building for serving beer, wine, and pop, and a kitchen for serving meals during public events make up the core of the park today. There is also a ticket building, restrooms, and picnic areas. The buildings are arranged in a clearly defined complex surrounded by a chain link fence. Primarily utilitarian in nature, the buildings are frame or concrete block construction with metal or asphalt gabled roofs and a two-shade earth-tone color scheme inspired by Bavarian architecture. The site is planted with mature trees, and the park is buffered from the road by a large soccer field. An adjacent parcel is utilized as a parking lot for public events.



*Image 85: German Park Recreation Club (5549 Pontiac Trail)  
Upper Left: Clubhouse, Dance Hall, and Picnic Shelter  
Upper Right: Old Dance Hall  
Lower Left: Beverage House  
Lower Right: Kitchen*

# Findings

## ***Evaluation Results***

The resources surveyed during this project were evaluated for eligibility for listing to the National Register of Historic Places based on known history and exterior architectural integrity. However, in-depth historical research was not completed and interior evaluation of the buildings was not possible. Therefore, based on this cursory review, the following properties may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register and warrant further study and evaluation to determine eligibility.

Two resources in the study area were previously listed to the National Register. St. Patrick's Parish Complex was listed in 1982 for significance in architecture and religion during the nineteenth century. The Nathan B. Devereaux Octagon House at 66425 West Eight Mile Road was listed to the National Register in 2003 as locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture with a period of significance of 1864. One additional resource, the 1864/c.1880 Nathan Esek and Sarah Emergene Sutton House at 5145 Pontiac Trail, has been determined eligible and a National Register nomination is currently underway. The house is significant under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact, rural example of the Italianate style.

### **Significance and National Register Eligibility for Property Type 1: Residential Buildings**

Houses eligible under Criterion C for Architecture include representative examples of residential architecture in Northfield Township and may exhibit nationally popular styles or vernacular interpretations of those styles. In order to qualify for listing to the National Register, the building must be at least fifty years of age and retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, and overall architectural integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. In some cases, houses with synthetic siding, replacement windows, or enclosed porches may be considered eligible, if other character-defining architectural features that convey the significance of the house remain visible and intact. Houses should also occupy their original site. Although not evaluated during this project, interiors should retain high integrity as well, including the layout of room and character-defining features such as mantles, staircase balustrades, window and door surrounds, or other decorative woodwork.

The following properties may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register and warrant further study to determine eligibility. *Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape, Context 2: Growth of Whitmore Lake – Railroads, Tourism, and Ice, Context 3: Changes to Rural Life, and Context 4: The Post-War Era* are applicable to residential buildings in Northfield Township.

#### **O'Brien House (2375 East Five Mile Road) – 1894**

One of the best-preserved late nineteenth-century farmhouses in Northfield Township, the 1894 O'Brien House is a two-story vernacular house featuring pared-down Queen Anne detailing, including two-over-two wood windows and sawn porch woodwork. According to the Centennial Farms file, Irish immigrants James O'Brien and his son James J. O'Brien purchased the original 120 acres in 1837. The current farmhouse was built in 1894, and the plat maps show "Mrs. Michael O'Brien" owned the property at that time.



*Image 86: O'Brien House  
(2375 East Five Mile Road)*

By 1915, Frank O'Brien owned the farm with his sisters, and later with his wife, Teresa. They grew corn, hay, and oats for animal feed, as well as wheat and potatoes as cash crops. They also raised Durham cattle for milk and beef, as well as hogs. The O'Brien family continued to operate the farm through the late twentieth century, and they retain ownership today. The farm originally had a number of agricultural outbuildings, including a large dairy barn that aerial images show was lost between 1966 and 1979. The property now includes a garage and shed built between 1979 and 1984 and a pool built between 1966 and 1979.



*Image 87: O'Brien House  
(2375 East Five Mile Road)*

Since the O'Brien Centennial Farm has lost all historic agricultural outbuildings, it no longer conveys its history as a late nineteenth and twentieth century crop and livestock farm. However, the O'Brien House is one of the most intact farmhouses remaining in the township. The O'Brien House appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling, although it has lost integrity of association. The house may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture with a period of significance of 1894, when the house was constructed.

#### Kalmbach Farm (385 West Joy Road) - c.1870

The Kalmbach Farm includes an intact Italianate-style farmhouse, as well as a dairy barn and milk house. Constructed around 1870, the house is a two-story gable-front-and-wing form with arched two-over-two wood windows, elaborate masonry hoods, and heavy wood brackets under the cornice. The house has a hip-roof porch supported by square wood posts with sawn woodwork, and also retains a stone foundation and interior brick chimney. The house was built for Charles and Christina Kalmbach, who came to Michigan from Württemberg, Germany. Their farm produced barley, Indian corn, oats, wheat, potatoes, and apples, as well as milk cows, sheep, hogs, and chickens.



*Image 88: Kalmbach Farmhouse  
(385 West Joy Road)*

Around 1900, the farm passed to their son, Ferdinand Kalmbach, and his wife, Augustine, who expanded dairy operations at the farm. The farm retains a well-preserved frame gambrel-roof bank barn that housed dairy cows and was constructed with milled lumber around 1920. A milk house constructed around the same time also remains extant and is an unusual frame example of this outbuilding type in the township. The remains of a concrete silo are adjacent to the dairy barn. Ferdinand and Augustine Kalmbach retained ownership until at least 1937, and dairy operations continued until the 1950s. The adjacent farm fields



*Image 89: Dairy Barn at Kalmbach Farm  
(385 West Joy Road)*

remain under cultivation, although no longer associated with the farmstead.

The Kalmbach Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register for local significance under Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance should begin c.1870 with the construction of the house, but more research is needed to identify the end date, which likely coincides with the end of dairy operations on the farm in the 1950s, and to evaluate eligibility under Criterion A for Agriculture.



*Image 90: Kalmbach Farmhouse Detailing (385 West Joy Road)*

#### Thomas P. Kearney House (6660 North Maple Road) – c.1875

The Thomas P. Kearney House, also known as Pinewood Farm, is an intact brick Italianate-style house with a two-story front-gable form. A flat-roof, one-story porch supported by grouped square wood posts forms a balcony at the second floor with a diamond-pattern wood balustrade. The house retains four-over-four wood windows in arched openings with brick and stone hoods, dentil detailing at the cornice, a decorative wood lunette window in the gable, and the entrance features double-leaf wood doors with an arched transom. Plat maps show the property was purchased by T.P. Kearney by 1874, and the form and detailing of the house suggest it was built soon after. The property also retains a frame garage and outbuildings that were not accessible during this survey. Additional research about the history and architecture of the house and outbuildings is needed.



*Image 91 Thomas P. Kearney House (6660 North Maple Road)*



*Image 92: Thomas P. Kearney House Detailing (6660 North Maple Road)*



Image 93: Thomas P. Kearney House Detailing (6660 North Maple Road)

Joshua Leland House (3850 East North Territorial Road) – 1846

The Joshua Leland House is a distinctive Greek Revival-style house with a two-story, front-gable form and Classical detailing. A flat-roof, one-story porch supported by heavy square wood columns with a band of trim at the cornice is centered on the front (north) elevation. The entrance contains a paneled wood door with a wood storm door flanked by wide, twelve-light-over-one-panel wood sidelights, separated by pilasters. An eight-light-over-two-panel wood door leads to the roof of the porch and features four-light wood sidelights with a Classical surround featuring pilasters supporting an entablature. The house retains six-over-six wood windows, a wide band of trim at the cornice with partially returned cornices, and wide wood corner pilasters. The property no longer retains historic domestic or agricultural outbuildings, although a c.1995 pole barn and a c.2008 shed are located southeast of the house. Plat maps show the house was built by Joshua Leland, and according to Wystan Stevens' *Northfield Harvest*, it was completed in 1846. The house was inherited by his son Emory Ezra Leland, who served as the justice of the peace, a state legislator, and a county probate judge. His son Claude Leland inherited the farm, although it is no longer owned by the Leland family.



Image 94: Joshua Leland House (3850 East North Territorial Road)



Image 95: Joshua Leland House Detailing (3850 East North Territorial Road)

The Joshua Leland House is a remarkably intact Greek Revival house, once part of a nineteenth and twentieth century farmstead. The house appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, although the loss of the historic outbuildings has resulted in some loss of integrity of association. The house may be eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion C for architecture, with a period of significance of 1846, when the house was constructed.



*Image 96: Joshua Leland House Detailing (3850 East North Territorial Road)*

**Schairer House (1240 West North Territorial Road) – 1932**

The Schairer House is a remarkably intact eclectic house in the western section of rural Northfield Township. Constructed in 1932, the house features elements of the Craftsman and Colonial Revival styles, including a jerkinhead roof, hip-roof dormers, modillions and brackets at the cornice, and faux half timbering at the gable ends. The house retains weatherboard siding, four-over-four wood windows set in pairs or groups, and an interior brick chimney with a cast-stone cap. The property also retains a c.1955 garage with similar detailing to the house, a c.1987 frame garage, and c.1995 shed, and a c.1995 enclosed gazebo.

The Schairer House appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible to the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture as a remarkably intact eclectic house in rural Northfield Township.



*Image 97: Schairer House and Garage (1240 West North Territorial Road)*

Gustav Radtke House (574 East Shore Drive) – 1923

This distinctive, one-and-one-half-story Craftsman-style stone bungalow is located in the village of Whitmore Lake. The house is side-gabled with an engaged porch, which was originally enclosed with screens that were replaced with one-over-one windows in the 1990s. The front elevation also features a wide, shed-roof dormer clad in slate tiles with paired four-over-one wood windows. The house has four-light-over-four-panel wood doors, four-over-one wood windows, widely overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and knee braces, and a wide stone chimney. Built by Gustav Radtke in 1923, the house was originally part of a farmstead that extended south to Lawton Lake. Radtke raised beef cattle and a large, gambrel-roof livestock barn remains extant south of the house, although in poor condition.



*Image 98: Gustav Radtke House  
(574 East Shore Drive)*

Although most of the domestic and agricultural outbuildings on this former farm have been lost, the Gustav Radtke House is a rare example of a stone bungalow that appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling. Therefore, the house may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture with a period of significance of 1923, when the house was constructed.



*Image 99: Gustav Radtke House Detailing  
(574 East Shore Drive)*



*Image 100: Gustav Radtke House Detailing (574 East Shore Drive)*



Bessert-Ryan House (7441 Spencer Road) – c.1871

The Bessert-Ryan House is a remarkably intact farmhouse in rural Northfield Township. It was once part of a large farm, though the historic outbuildings have been lost or altered. Lewis Bessert purchased the property in 1871, and the house was likely built soon after, as it is present on the 1874 plat map. It features a traditional gable-front-and-wing form with a two-story front-gable wing and one-and-one-half-story side-gable wing with a full-width hip-roof porch. The house features Queen Anne detailing, including delicate sawn wood porch details, sawn wood vergeboards in the gables, and

elaborate wood lintels over the two-over-two windows. John Ryan, who had sold the property to Bessert, re-acquired the property around 1875.

Although its association as a nineteenth and twentieth century farm has been lost, the Bessert-Ryan House appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling, and therefore may be eligible to the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture as a remarkably intact farmhouse with Queen Anne detailing in Northfield Township. Additional research is necessary to determine the ownership and construction history of the house and to identify the period of significance, which likely coincides with the original construction of the house.



*Image 101: Bessert-Ryan House (7441 Spencer Road)*

## **Significance and National Register Eligibility for Property Type 2: Farm Complexes**

The historic farm complexes of Northfield Township may meet National Register Criterion A for their local significance in the history of agriculture and settlement and Criterion C for the architectural significance as representative examples of early or uncommon architectural styles. Historic farm complexes are associated with the subsistence agriculture and small family farms from the settlement period through the turn of the twentieth century when farms began to grow larger and grow more cash crops. Eligible farmsteads retain domestic and agricultural outbuildings related to farming activities, including housing livestock, storing or preparing food, and cultivating, harvesting, and storing crops. Most farmsteads also retain historic patterns of cultivated fields, pastures, wooded areas, and a primary dwelling, which together convey patterns of agricultural production and lifestyles during the settlement period in Northfield Township.

In order for a farm complex to qualify for listing in the National Register, it must meet one of the above criteria for evaluation, as well as retaining sufficient integrity of setting, location, materials, design,

feeling, and association. A farm complex meets Criterion A if the primary dwelling remains extant and enough outbuildings and/or acreage remain intact to convey the historic agricultural use of the land. Most of the outbuildings, field patterns, and related structures should be at least fifty years old or older.

The farm complex derives its integrity and significance as a collection of multiple components. Therefore, integrity is evaluated as a whole rather than as it applies to individual resources. Common changes to farmhouses include application of synthetic materials, replacement windows or doors, alteration of porches, and construction of additions. Common changes to the farm complex include the relocation of outbuildings within the complex, removal of outbuildings that are no longer in use, and the addition of new outbuildings as farm operations evolve. These changes do not necessarily render a farm complex ineligible, as long as the farmhouse retains its overall form, fenestration, and identifying details, the general farm layout is retained, and the majority of historic materials remain intact.

The following properties may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register and warrant further evaluation to determine eligibility. *Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape*, *Context 3: Changes to Rural Life*, and *Context 4: The Post-War Era* are applicable to farm complexes in Northfield Township.

Arthur Zeeb Farm (5370 and 5380 Earhart Road) – 1900-c.1985

The Arthur Zeeb Farm is significant as an intact and well-preserved farmstead with resources dating from around 1900 through the 1980s. The farm includes two farmhouses surrounded by mature trees with domestic and agricultural outbuildings arranged in a clearly defined complex. The 1924 farmhouse, a one-and-one-half-story, side-gable, Craftsman-style bungalow, has vinyl siding and windows but is otherwise intact with full-width, engaged porch supported by tapered wood posts on brick piers and a gabled dormer. A 1956 Minimal Traditional-style house with an attached garage is located to its south.



Image 102: Arthur Zeeb Farmhouse  
(5370 and 5380 Earhart Road)

Domestic and agricultural outbuildings include a 1900 frame dairy barn with a gambrel roof, a c.1920 concrete block milk house attached the front elevation of the dairy barn, a c.1924 garage, a c.1950 concrete silo, a c.1950 granary, a c.1950 equipment shed and corn crib, two c.1970 pole barns, and three c.1985 steel grain bins. The landscape illustrates the evolution of the farm throughout the twentieth century. The farm was originally primarily a hog farm, and later raised dairy cows and grew corn, wheat, and other crops. The Zeeks also invested in advanced farm machinery as new technology became available and rented services to neighboring farms.



Image 103: Dairy Barn at Arthur Zeeb Farm  
(5370 and 5380 Earhart Road)

The farm was established by German immigrants George and Katharine Zeeb, who purchased the property in 1885. Their house remains extant at 5310 Earhart Road, and although not surveyed during this project, the building should also be evaluated for eligibility to the National Register with the Arthur Zeeb Farm at 5370 and 5380 Earhart Road, as the two farms appear to have historically operated as a single unit. George Zeeb, Jr., and his wife Margaret inherited the farm and raised primarily hogs. Their children both stayed on the farm, with daughter Cora inheriting the home place and son Arthur building the 1924 house just to the north. Arthur and Mary Zeeb's son Kenneth took over the farm in the 1950s, and the 1956 house was likely built for him and his wife Joann, who were married that year. Kenneth and Joanne Zeeb primarily raised dairy cows until the late 1980s.



*Image 104: George Zeeb Farmhouse  
(5310 Earhart Road)*

The Arthur Zeeb Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture as a multi-generational farm that retains largely intact farmhouses and a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings, with a period of significance from 1900 when the oldest extant building (the dairy barn) was constructed through 1987 when the dairy herd was sold. The adjacent George Zeeb Farm should be evaluated for the National Register with the Arthur Zeeb Farm, with an earlier period of significance starting in 1891, when the home place at 5310 Earhart Road was constructed.



*Image 105: Granary and Equipment Shed at Arthur Zeeb Farm  
(5370 and 5380 Earhart Road)*

Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm (1515 and 1519 East Joy Road) – 1903-c.2013

The Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm is an intact twentieth-century dairy farm with resources dating from 1903 through the twenty-first century, as the farm remains in operation. The property includes two farmhouses and a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings forming a clearly defined complex. The 1909 farmhouse is a vernacular, side-gable house with a gabled dormer and a full-width hip porch supported by sawn posts with sawn brackets, although it has vinyl siding and vinyl replacement windows. A hip-roof, brick veneer Ranch house to its east was constructed in 1964 and remains highly intact. Domestic and agricultural outbuildings include a 1903 cross-gambrel dairy barn, a c.1920 concrete silo, a c.1920 milk house, two early twentieth century corn cribs moved to the farm around 1970, a c.1985 pole barn, two c.2003 pole barns, and a c.2013 garage.

The farm was owned by Fred Kempf, Jr., in the late nineteenth century, and was purchased by George Hynes by 1915. The Hyneses married into the Cavanaugh family, who inherited the farm by the mid-twentieth century and raised chickens and dairy cows until the early 1970s when they switched to beef cattle, which they raised until the mid-1980s when they sold the herd. Today the farm produces square hay bales, corn, and soybeans.

The Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture as a multi-generational farm that retains largely intact farmhouses and a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings, with a period of significance from 1903 when the oldest extant building (the dairy barn) was constructed through the 1970s when the dairy herd was sold.



Image 106: Kempf-Hynes-Cavanaugh Farm (1515 and 1519 East Joy Road)

#### Kapp Farm (2271 East Northfield Church Road) – 1865-c.2012

The Kapp Farm is significant as a highly intact farm and one of only two farms still operating full-time in Northfield Township. The vernacular house was built in 1865 and retains weatherboard siding, one-over-one wood windows, and partially returned cornices. A shed-roof porch with tapered wood posts on a low wall was added in 1926, as well as three-over-one wood windows at the second floor. The property encompasses approximately 137 acres and includes a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings that form a clearly defined complex surrounded by cultivated fields. Outbuildings include a c.1870 stone smokehouse, c.1900 corn crib, c.1900 livestock barn, c.1900 stable, 1919 dairy barn, c.1919 cement-stave silo, and c.1920 concrete block milk house, as well as sheds, pole barns, and grain bins.

Plat maps show the property was purchased by Frederick Kapp, who was born in Germany, by 1864. His son Emmanuel took over the farm between 1915 and 1920, and retained ownership with his wife,

Amelia, until at least 1937. Their son Hollis Kapp and his wife Viola owned the farm until 2000, when it was sold out of the family. The Kapps raised livestock and grew cash crops, and the current owners, Lee and Lori Maulbetsch, grow corn, soybeans, and seed rye and have a small number of Holstein cows.

The Kapp Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture as a multi-generational farm that retains an intact farmhouse and a full complement of domestic and agricultural outbuildings. The period of significance should begin in 1865, when the house was constructed, but more research is needed to identify the end date, likely coinciding with a significant change in agricultural practices.



*Image 107: Kapp Farm (2271 East Northfield Church Road)*

Navroth-Graf Farm (370 West Northfield Church Road) – c.1886-c.1995

The Navroth-Graf Farm is significant as an intact twentieth century farm with resources dating from the late nineteenth through the turn of the twenty-first century. The vernacular farmhouse was built around 1886 and retains a gable-front-and-wing form, one-over-one wood windows, an exterior brick chimney, and a stone foundation. Although the house has later aluminum siding, a new master rib metal roof, and screened front porch, the house is largely intact. Domestic and agricultural outbuildings include a c.1915 dairy barn, c.1915 granary, c.1915 chicken house, c.1950 garage, and c.1950 equipment shed, as well as a c.1900 privy, c.1987 Quonset hut, and c.1995 shed.



*Image 108: Navroth-Graf Farm (370 West Northfield Church Road)*

The farm was established in the late nineteenth century by Julius Navroth, a German immigrant who came to Northfield Township in 1886. He built the current house around 1886 and established a livestock and crop farm. Navroth retained ownership until at least 1937.

The Navroth-Graf Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Agriculture as a relatively intact farmhouse with an impressive and well-preserved collection of domestic and agricultural outbuildings. The period of significance should begin in 1900 with the construction of the house, but more research is needed to identify the end date, likely coinciding with a significant change in agricultural practices, as well as to evaluate eligibility under Criterion C for Architecture.



*Image 109: Chicken House at Navroth-Graf Farm (370 West Northfield Church Road)*



*Image 110: Navroth-Graf Farm (370 West Northfield Church Road)*

Groves Farm (6015 Sutton Road) – 1846-c.1950

The Groves Farm is significant as a highly intact and well-preserved farm complex, including the oldest known agricultural outbuildings remaining extant in Northfield Township. The farmhouse was built in 1922 to replace an earlier house that was lost in a fire. The house was originally a vernacular building with no ornamentation and a partial-width front porch, but it was updated with Colonial Revival detailing, possibly c.1950, and now features a central entrance flanked by four-light-over-one-panel wood sidelights and a Classical surround with pilasters supporting an entablature. A c.1950 garage is located adjacent to the house, with the remainder of the outbuildings located across Sutton Road in a clearly defined complex. Outbuildings include an 1846 dairy barn, the oldest known dairy barn in the township and one of the few gable-roof examples; a c.1850 sheep barn, one of the few surviving sheep barns in the township; a c.1850 horse barn; a c.1900 corn crib and small animal house for chickens and rabbits; and a c.1900 pump house, one of the only examples remaining extant in the township.



*Image 111: Groves Farmhouse (6015 Sutton Road)*

The farm was established in 1831 by Nicholas Groves and passed to William Groves by 1856, then to A.D. Groves by 1915. The house remained in the Groves family until the 1980s.

The Groves Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture as an intact farmhouse with a well-preserved collection of domestic and agricultural outbuildings including some of the oldest extant in the township. The period of significance should begin in 1846 with the construction of the oldest extant building (the dairy barn), but more research is needed to identify the end date, likely coinciding with a significant change in agricultural practices or the date the farm was sold out of the Groves family.



*Image 112: Groves Farm Complex (6015 Sutton Road)*

#### Wheeler-Leland Farm (7285 Whitmore Lake Road) – c.1875-1988

The Wheeler-Leland Farm is significant as an intact farmstead with resources dating from the late nineteenth century through the 1980s. The vernacular farmhouse was built between 1874 and 1895 and features elements of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles, with a two-story front-gable wing and a one-and-one-half-story side-gable wing, each with a hip-roof porch. The house retains elaborate sawn porch ornamentation, two-over-two wood windows, and weatherboard siding. A 1957 frame Ranch house is located northwest of the farmhouse.



*Image 113: Wheeler-Leland Farmhouse (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)*

Domestic and agricultural outbuildings are arranged along a long driveway extending west from Whitmore Lake Road behind the farmhouse, and along a second driveway extending south from West Five Mile Road from the Ranch house. The complex retains nineteen outbuildings and structures, including the 1909 dairy barn, 1953 livestock barn, c.1915 apple cellar, c.1945 maintenance shop, and a c.1950 chicken house, as well as several equipment sheds, hay barns, silos, and grain bins.



*Image 114: Wheeler-Leland Farm Complex (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)*

constructed. The Wheelers married into the Leland family, who still retain ownership today. The farm was primarily a dairy operation until 1977 when the herd was sold. The Lelands continued to cultivate crops until 2000, and the fields are now leased.

The Wheeler-Leland Farm appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore is likely eligible to the National Register for local significance under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture as an intact farmhouse with a large, intact complex of domestic and agricultural outbuildings surrounded by cultivated farmland. The period of significance should begin in c.1869, when the house was constructed, and end in 1977, when the dairy herd was sold.



*Image 115: Wheeler-Leland Farm Complex (7285 Whitmore Lake Road)*

### **Significance and National Register Eligibility for Property Type 3: Churches and Church Complexes**

Churches are historically significant as centers of community life and identity and therefore may be eligible under Criterion A for local significance in social history. Churches may also be eligible under Criterion C for architecture as representative of popular national styles or local interpretations of those styles. Churches also must meet Criteria Consideration A, and therefore must derive significance from historical or architectural importance, rather than from the religion itself.

To be eligible for listing to the National Register, churches must be at least fifty years old and meet at least one of the criteria described above. Church buildings must retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, materials, design, and workmanship. To qualify for Criterion C, alterations should be minimal, although additions and replacement materials do not necessarily render a building ineligible if the form and detailing are intact and convey the building's architectural significance.

Church complexes derive their integrity and significance from their multiple components. Therefore, integrity is evaluated as a whole rather than as it applies to individual resources. Alterations do not necessarily render a church complex ineligible, as long as the church retains its overall form, fenestration, and identifying details, the general complex layout is retained, and the majority of historic materials remain intact.

The following properties may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register and warrant further evaluation to determine eligibility. *Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape* and *Context 2: Growth of Whitmore Lake – Railroads, Tourism, and Ice* are applicable to church complexes.

Wesley United Methodist Church (9318 Main Street) – 1867-1868, 1958-1959, c.1980

The Wesley United Methodist Church is significant as the oldest extant church in Northfield Township and an intact example of Greek Revival religious architecture. The church was built in 1868 and features a pedimented gable, multi-light transom over the front doors, and square corner pilasters. The front and side elevations feature tall, narrow stained-glass windows, and there is a three-part bell tower. A basement was dug in 1908, a large, side-gabled addition was built at the southeast corner of the building in 1957, and a second addition was constructed on the northeast corner in 1980. The church remains largely intact, although vinyl siding has been added.

The Wesley United Methodist Church appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible to the National Register under Criterion A for Social History and under Criterion C for architecture as the oldest church building in Whitmore Lake and Northfield Township and as an example of the Greek Revival style. The period of significance should begin in 1867 when construction began on the building and continue through 1980 to include the rear additions.



*Image 116: Wesley United Methodist Church Detail (9318 Main Street)*



*Image 117: Wesley United Methodist Church (9318 Main Street)*



St. John's Lutheran Church Complex (2945 East Northfield Church Road) – 1875-1963

St. John's Lutheran Church Complex is located in the southeast section of the township and primarily served the German immigrant families who established the farms surrounding the church. The complex includes the church sanctuary, rectory, two garages, and a cemetery.

The first sanctuary for St. John's Lutheran Church was completed in 1875, followed by an adjacent rectory. Both buildings were destroyed by fire in 1932 and rebuilt later that year. The sanctuary is a brick, front-gabled, Gothic Revival-style building with a square bell tower featuring a crenellated parapet at the southeast corner. The church features pointed arch window and



*Image 118: St. John's Lutheran Church (2945 East Northfield Church Road)*

door openings, stained glass windows with tracery, brick and stone buttresses, a rose window above the entrance bay, and cast-stone cross-motif finials. The adjacent rectory was rebuilt in the Craftsman style, popular at that time, and is a one-and-one-half-story, brick house with a side-gabled form and large gabled dormers on the front (south) and rear elevations. The full-width engaged porch is supported by brick columns with cast-stone caps on cheek walls between columns and on cheek walls bordering the concrete steps. The house remains largely intact, although the windows have been replaced and the dormers are clad in vinyl siding. A c.1932 side-gable, frame garage with a rolling metal door, original wood doors, and rolled asphalt cladding is located east of the rectory, and a c.1963 side-gable, brick veneer garage with a rolling metal door, one-light metal door, and concrete block foundation is located north of the rectory.

The complex also includes a churchyard cemetery, west of the sanctuary and rectory. The cemetery contains nearly 400 graves, and known burials date from the 1870s to the present day. The cemetery is enclosed with a wrought iron fence with field stone piers with cast-stone caps at the gates, which provide access to wide pathways extending north-south across the cemetery. Grave markers are primarily limestone, granite, or marble and include headstone and footstone, pedestal-tomb, and obelisk types displaying lambs, crowns, angels, urns, or common funerary art. The landscape is relatively flat with sparse mature trees, including cedar, and ornamental shrubs planted at some graves.

The St. John's Lutheran Church Complex appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register for local significance under Criterion A for German Ethnic History and Social History, as well as under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact church complex that served as a foundational community institution for German farmers who immigrated to the area in the early nineteenth century. The period of significance should begin in the 1870s with the establishment of the cemetery, which is the oldest extant resource, however additional research is needed to identify the end date.



*Image 119: St. John's Lutheran Church Detailing  
(2945 East Northfield Church Road)*



*Image 120: St. John's Lutheran Church Rectory  
(2945 East Northfield Church Road)*



*Image 121: St. John's Lutheran Church Cemetery  
(2945 East Northfield Church Road)*

## Significance and National Register Eligibility for Property Type 4: Cemeteries

Cemeteries may be a contributing resource as part of a church complex if the cemetery's layout, markers, and other character-defining features remain intact. None of the surveyed cemeteries meet Criteria Consideration D for individual listing to the National Register.

## Significance and National Register Eligibility for Property Type 5: Civic and Recreational Buildings

Institutional buildings are historically significant as centers of community development and identity as places where community members gather to be educated, conduct civic business, socialize, and care for one another. Institutional buildings may be eligible under Criterion A as important educational, social, and governmental institutions, and under Criterion C as representative examples of nationally popular building forms, plans, and styles, or as local vernacular interpretations of these forms and styles.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, an institutional building must be at least fifty years old and meet one of the above criteria for evaluation. Buildings must retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, and overall architectural integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. If a building is significant under Criterion C, alterations should be minimal on both the exterior and the interior. Common alterations including replacement windows or doors, or synthetic siding do not automatically render an institutional building ineligible, especially if decorative detailing, window and door surrounds, roof detailing, and other character-defining architectural features are visible and intact. Buildings that are eligible under Criterion A for their importance in history or as part of a complex may display lower integrity and still be considered eligible if the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its context and function, or if the complex remains intact.

The following properties may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register and warrant further evaluation to determine eligibility. *Context 1: Early Northfield Township – An Agricultural Landscape* and *Context 4: The Post-War Era* are applicable to civic and recreational buildings in Northfield Township.

### Northfield Township Fire Station – 75 Barker Road – 1946-1999

Following reorganization of the fire department in 1943, the township's first fire station at 75 Barker Road was built in 1946. The building was constructed by community volunteers using a variety of donated materials salvaged from other buildings. It is a long, rectangular, two-story building built of concrete block with a barrel-vaulted, asphalt roof and metal, multi-light casement windows. Two large rolling metal doors, each with two lights, are centered on the front (north) elevation and provide access to the truck bays, which initially housed the single pumper truck the department owned when the station was built. A new pumper truck was added to the station in 1948, followed by a tanker in 1950.



Image 122: Northfield Township Fire Station  
(75 Barker Road)

An apartment at the rear of the building was originally occupied by the volunteer fire chief, and the second floor was utilized as meeting space. In 1969, the Township took over the department, and it was officially named the Northfield Township Fire Department. A one-story, side-gable, frame addition was constructed onto the fire station in the early 1970s, then expanded in the 1990s. By the mid-1980s, the fire station also housed the Township Hall, and the police department was located in the rear addition. A second fire station was built in 1977 on East North Territorial

Road, a more central location to the township, followed by a new police department, fire department administration, and township office building in 2001. As a result, the Barker Road fire station was closed in 1999, although the township offices remained until 2001, and the building is currently used for leased office space and storage.

The Northfield Township Fire Station appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, association, and therefore may be eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A for Social History and under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact, community-built vernacular building housing a public service organization.



*Image 123: Northfield Township Fire Department (75 Barker Road)*

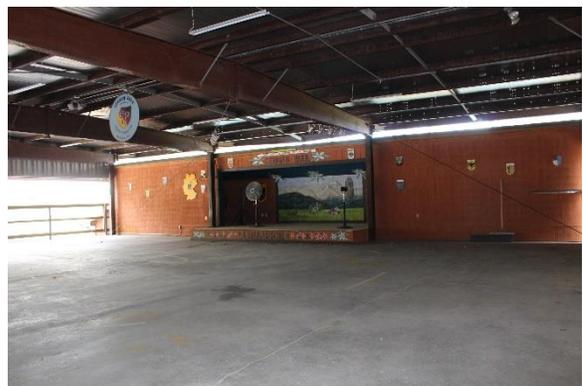
#### German Park Recreation Club (5549 Pontiac Trail) – 1938-c.1988

The German Park Recreation Club is significant as an intact recreation complex founded by a local immigrant population to serve the community with extant resources constructed between 1938 and 1988. In the 1920s, many Germans were leaving Europe to come to the United States. However, discrimination against German immigrants at that time necessitated the formation of tight-knit, supportive communities. German families in Ann Arbor and Northfield Township gathered together at each other's homes or nearby lakesides for picnics, music, and dancing, but they soon outgrew hosting these gatherings in their own homes. In 1938, the eastern ten acres of the current park was purchased to continue this tradition of hosting large picnics, funded by donations from community leaders and the sale of bonds. The first public picnic was held on July 17, 1938.



*Image 124: German Park Recreation Club Complex (5549 Pontiac Trail)*

Located on ten acres in rural Northfield Township, the park includes buildings that support the club member activities and public events. The buildings are primarily frame, although a few are concrete block, with vertical sheathing in the gables and a two-shade, earth tone color scheme in reference to architecture common to Bavaria in southeastern Germany. Original extant buildings include the old dance hall and the beverage house, both of which are frame buildings constructed in 1938. Growth continued steadily through the mid-twentieth century, with the construction of a picnic shelter in 1953; a soccer field in 1957, which also served as the first parking lot for public picnics; a clubhouse in 1962-1963 with a kitchen, bar, and meeting space at the lower level and a dance hall for public events at the upper level; a separate kitchen building in 1967; and women's and men's restrooms from 1967 to 1970. Another period of growth came in the 1980s with



*Image 125: German Park Recreation Club Complex (5549 Pontiac Trail)*

an expansion to the beverage house in 1980 and the clubhouse in 1983, the acquisition of the western ten acres for a new parking lot, and the construction of the ticket house in 1988. The site is planted with mature trees and set well back from the road with a long circular driveway.

The German Park Recreation Club appears to retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association, and therefore it may be eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A for German Ethnic Heritage, Recreation, and Social History, as well as under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact park complex established by the local German population initially to provide support within their own community and later expanding to become a significant venue for recreation and social events celebrating German culture. The period of significance should begin in 1938 with the construction of the oldest extant buildings (the old dance hall and the beverage house) and continue through 1988, when the current buildings were completed.



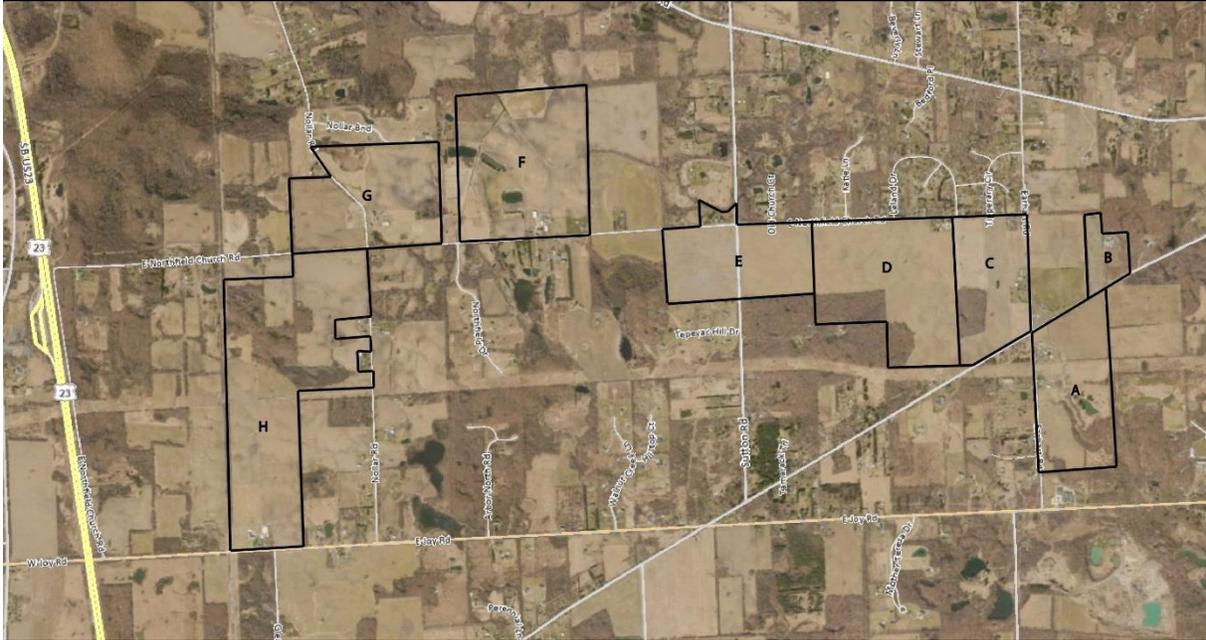
*Image 126: German Park Recreation Club Complex (5549 Pontiac Trail)*

## **Significance and National Register Eligibility for Historic Districts**

### German Heritage Rural Historic District

In addition to the above resources, the establishment of a rural historic district in the southeastern section of the township should be evaluated further for eligibility under Criterion A for German Ethnic Heritage, Settlement and Exploration, and Agriculture, as well as under Criterion C for Architecture. This area of the township was settled by a relatively large population of German immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, and this pattern of settlement continued through the early twentieth century when many Germans were fleeing Europe for the United States. The potential historic district should include several intact farmsteads centered around St. John's Lutheran Church and the German Park Recreation Club, both of which were important community institutions providing support to immigrant families and their descendants.

The following resources were surveyed during this project and appear to retain sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association to contribute to a historic district. The resources have been assigned a letter designation and keyed to the map below. The resources are largely connected by wide parcels of cultivated farmland, and in some areas, there are also additional properties that were not evaluated during this project, therefore further architectural assessment and historical research are needed to determine if these properties comprise a viable historic district, either contiguous or discontinuous.



*Image 127: Map of German Heritage Sites  
(map by Cheri Szcodronski, base map by Washtenaw County MapWashtenaw)*

A	5310, 5370, 5380 Earhart Road	Arthur and George Zeeb Farms
B	5549 Pontiac Trail	German Park Recreation Club
C	5565 Earhart Road	Ehnis Farm
D	3690 East Northfield Church Road	Kern Farm
E	2945 East Northfield Church Road	St. John's Lutheran Church Complex
F	2271 East Northfield Church Road	Kapp Farm
G	5766 Nollar Road	Nollar Farm
H	1515, 1519 East Joy Road	Kempf-Hynes Cavanaugh Farm

## ***Preservation Issues Planning Needs***

### **Whitmore Lake**

The village of Whitmore Lake changed substantially as it grew in the late nineteenth century to a tourist destination then shifted in the mid-twentieth century to a permanent residential community. As a result, much of the historic fabric of the village has been lost; the tourist hotels burned in the 1930s and 1940s and were not rebuilt, the commercial core on the west side of Main Street has been highly altered, and the commercial and recreational buildings on the east side of Main Street were demolished for lakeside housing. Today the village continues to be primarily residential with small business and civic organizations serving the community but lacking substantial industry or large-scale commerce.

The loss of historic fabric is the greatest threat to the village and makes preserving the remaining historic fabric even more critical. Preventing further change to the remaining commercial core on Main Street, as well as preventing further alterations to the historic houses on Main Street, Barker Road, and Margaret Road, should be a top priority. Although a zoning overlay could be considered, incentive programs are often the most effective method of encouraging private property owners to participate

in historic preservation efforts. Tax credit and façade grant programs are common financial incentive programs, and community recognition programs, such as preservation awards or historic tours, might also be considered.

### Rural Northfield Township

The greatest threat to rural Northfield Township is the loss of agriculture and the sale of farmland for development. Throughout the township, the sale of large parcels for residential development began in the late twentieth century and continues today. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, most rural township residents made their living farming. However, there are only two full-time farms in the township today that continue to grow the hay, corn, wheat, and soybeans that dominated the township throughout the twentieth century. One farmer noted that in ten years, “we may not be here, the houses will push us out.”<sup>183</sup>

Residents in the southern section of the township are eligible to participate in the City of Ann Arbor’s Greenbelt Program. The goal of the program is to preserve working farmland, natural areas, and land adjacent to the Huron River through the purchase of development rights, and over six thousand acres have been preserved in the eight townships that participate in the program. One of the challenges of the program is that development rights are based on market value, and the market values for farmland in Northfield Township are lower than values in Ann Arbor Township. As a result, farm owners on the south side of Joy Road, which forms the boundary between the two townships, receive a greater financial incentive for participating in the program than their immediate neighbors on the north side of the road. This disparity can result in an unintentional disincentive for farm owners in Northfield Township to participate in the program, in spite of the associated land preservation and tax benefits. In addition, Ann Arbor, Scio, and Webster townships support this program by offering matching funds for the purchase of development rights, while Northfield Township does not. The program also has limited success for preserving farmland in Northfield Township because the northern boundary of the Greenbelt District is Five Mile Road, and as a result, residents in the northern section of the township are not eligible to participate.<sup>184</sup>

Wake County Parks and Recreation has also participated in land conservation efforts through its Natural Areas Preservation Program. Established in 2001, this program identifies land for long-term preservation for ecological, recreational, and educational value. The Northfield Woods Preserve and Arbor Wood Preserve, both located on East Northfield Church Road and established in 2009, protect eighty-one acres of former farmland. Similarly, the Whitmore Lake Preserve on Seven Mile Road was established in 2013 to preserve 235 acres of mature forest and wetlands.<sup>185</sup>

In 2017, the Northfield Township Board of Trustees established the Land Preservation Committee to explore rural land preservation, including lakes, forests, wetlands, and agricultural land. The committee advocates for land preservation through public education events such as guided hikes; by

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<sup>183</sup> David Cavanaugh (owner of 1515 East Joy Road), personal interview by author, May 2, 2021.

<sup>184</sup> David Cavanaugh (owner of 1515 East Joy Road), personal interview by author, May 2, 2021; City of Ann Arbor, “Greenbelt,” <https://www.a2gov.org/greenbelt/Pages/greenbelthome.aspx> (accessed July 2021).

<sup>185</sup> Parks & Recreation, Washtenaw County, Michigan, “Natural Areas Preservation Program,” <https://mi-washtenawcounty.civicplus.com/939/Natural-Areas-Preservation-Program> (accessed July 2021); Parks & Recreation, Washtenaw County, Michigan, “Northfield Woods and Arbor Woods Preserves,” <https://www.washtenaw.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/Northfield-Woods-Arbor-Woods-Preserves-16> (accessed July 2021); Parks & Recreation, Washtenaw County, Michigan, “Whitmore Lake Preserve,” <https://www.washtenaw.org/facilities/facility/details/Whitmore-Lake-Preserve-31> (accessed July 2021).

contacting owners of large parcels to invite their participation in land conservation programs; and by recommending local ordinances to support land preservation throughout the township.<sup>186</sup>

To better preserve agricultural land and historic farmsteads in Northfield Township, a land conservation program funded through a modest property tax millage is worth evaluation. Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, and Webster Township have all implemented land conservation programs that focus on long-term protection of high quality agricultural and natural lands. These programs have received broad public support and could serve as useful models for implementing a similar program in Northfield Township. Similarly, the Legacy Land Conservancy, a county-wide land preservation program, and the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, a regional land preservation program, are non-profit organizations that serve Northfield Township and could provide useful support and guidance for a local land conservation program.

### Future Projects

Due to the relatively limited scope of the current project with respect to the substantial number of historic resources in Northfield Township, additional survey and research projects are recommended to better understand extant historic resources throughout the township, their current condition, and potential threats to their long-term preservation. The resources categorized Level 2 and Level 3 during the 2016-2017 windshield survey could be a useful starting point for future survey projects, however not all resources identified in these categories appear to retain sufficient integrity or historic important to warrant further documentation.

Additionally, the scope of the 2016-2017 windshield survey was limited to the oldest resources in the township, dating primarily to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and therefore additional documentation of mid-century resources would be useful for understanding the continued growth and change in the township during that period. A number of representative examples of Minimal Traditional, Ranch, and Contemporary styles were observed during the current project, as well as a small number of distinctive examples of these styles. Mid-twentieth century resources include not only residential buildings, but also civic buildings, such as the Whitmore Lake Public Schools Complex on Main Street. Although many of these properties were noted during the 2018 windshield survey, further research and documentation is needed.

One of the broader goals for the Northfield Township Historical Society is to educate residents of the township about the history and historic places in the township, in particular by expanding upon existing published histories. Primary published works include Wystan Stevens' *Northfield Harvest: A Pictorial History of Northfield Township and the Whitmore Lake Area*, Thomas P. Hennings' *Looking Back: The History of Northfield Township and the Whitmore Lake Area*, and Dorothy Kapp Shear's *Farm Girl in a Feed Sack Dress: Memories of a 1940s Michigan Family Farm*, as well as histories of the Wesley United Methodist Church and St. Patrick Catholic Church. However, these publications are somewhat limited in their scope and do not provide a comprehensive picture of the historical and architectural heritage of the township. Therefore, additional intensive level survey with in-depth research of the township's highest priority historic resources is recommended. Resources for intensive-level survey should be prioritized according to architectural integrity, historic importance, threats to long-term preservation, or some combination of these.

Public education can also be achieved through workshops. Topics might include general history of the township or specific historic places in the township; preservation assistance programs offered through local, regional, or statewide organizations; training for conducting historical research or documenting

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<sup>186</sup> Northfield Township, Michigan, "Land Preservation Committee," [https://www.twp-northfield.org/community\\_visitors/land\\_preservation\\_committee/index.php](https://www.twp-northfield.org/community_visitors/land_preservation_committee/index.php) (accessed July 2021).

resources according to best practices; or technical training in maintaining historic buildings. Workshops could be presented in partnership with local and regional land preservation organizations, local and statewide historic preservation organizations, or local and regional craftspeople. The goal of these types of programs should be to inform residents on a basic level, but also to empower them to take full ownership of their shared history, to preserve their own historic properties, and to advocate for the protection of their community's historic resources.

Building partnerships, advocating for historic places, and organizing public education programming can be achieved by volunteers. Basic historical research and resource documentation can also be achieved by volunteers, if properly trained by an appropriate professional. Leading workshops, especially hands-on workshops, and in-depth research, documentation, and evaluation of historic resources should be led by trained and experienced professionals. The State Historic Preservation Office provides annual grant opportunities for these types of projects through the Certified Local Government Program, and Northfield Township is eligible for these grants through Washtenaw County's status as a Certified Local Government.

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