



December 12, 2001

Military Streets Study Area*

This report was prepared by the staff of the Historic Designation Advisory Board in accordance with its responsibilities under a Programmatic Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office. Survey and historical research activities were undertaken. The results of the evaluation process follow the historical section of this report. A map depicting the boundaries of the study area and National Register eligibility recommendations, as well as a photographic sampling of housing types and streetscapes in the Military Streets Study Area, are attached.

**The name given to this area is for the sole purpose of this study, and is not intended to permanently change or create an identification that did not previously exist.*

Boundaries of the Military Streets Study Area

The Military Streets Study Area is approximately one-half square mile in size, located in the southwestern section of Detroit about three and one-half miles from the central business district. It is bounded by West Vernor Highway on the north, Cavalry Avenue on the east, Fisher Freeway and West Fort Street on the south and Waterman Avenue on the west. The area defined as the Military Streets Study Area is distinguishable from the surrounding area by streets oriented north-south between its two major thoroughfares. Different street patterns and street names exist west of Waterman and east of Cavalry, although the residential streetscapes contain houses of somewhat similar architectural styles.

Summary

Before it was developed as a residential community, the land on which the Military Streets Study Area is located was known for its abundance of springs and its proximity to Fort Wayne. Its military-related street names relate to the fort. Within its small area are several subdivisions, all built up with single-family and multi-unit detached middle-class housing constructed after 1875 through the mid-1920's. The houses were built in vernacular styles typical of the period - Victorian, Foursquare, Arts and Crafts, Bungalow and Colonial Revival. The somewhat typical housing stock features an abundance of early concrete block construction imitating stone for foundations, porches, and even whole buildings.

In addition to the domestic architecture, small commercial areas were developed on West Vernor Highway and West Fort Street. Several churches and public buildings were also built to serve the community. These include Beard Elementary School, Southwestern High School,

Campbell Library and Military Avenue Church.

History

The Military Streets Study Area consists of over fifteen subdivisions all platted and subdivided between 1869 and 1916. Under the Northwest Territory Law of 1790, all counties in the Midwest were divided into townships. The study area was in part of Springwells Township, established by Governor Lewis Cass in 1818 with its boundaries determined in 1827. At various intervals between 1849 and 1916, the City of Detroit annexed eastern and northern portions of Springwells Township until it shrunk from thirty-six square miles to eight and one-half square miles. In 1885, the land in the study area from Cavalry Avenue on the east to Livernois Avenue on the west was annexed to the City of Detroit. The remainder of the study area, from Livernois Avenue on the east to Waterman Avenue on the west, was annexed in 1906. All of Springwells eventually dissolved into Detroit, Dearborn, Melvindale, and Allen Park.

The name of the township of Springwells, was adopted because the number of large springs in the vicinity. The bubbling, clear, cold waters drew many Detroit picnickers to the area. It is quite likely that Native Americans lived in the area prior to its settlement by the French; when the Reeder sandbanks were leveled to build a road around 1875-76, the skeletons of Indians were found buried there, as well as the soldiers of British army general, William H. Harrison, and those of the Americans who fought in the War of 1812.

The Military Streets Study Area is located just over one-half mile north of Fort Wayne and the Detroit River. According to The History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan, many of the streets in the study area were named to honor the soldiers at Fort Wayne. These include Army Avenue, Artillery Avenue (Livernois), Army Avenue, Cadet Avenue, Cavalry Avenue, Cartridge Avenue, Dragoon Avenue, Infantry Avenue, Military Avenue, Musket Avenue, and Regular Avenue.

During the 1800's, Springwells was primarily a farming community, but the land had an abundance of high grade pure clay laid down during the Glacial Period. By the 1870's, brick making and tile manufacturing were becoming the main industries. Springwells contained several large brickyards; Detroit is said to have been built up with Springwells clay.

An article in the Detroit Free Press in May of 1873 talks about the vast amount of building going on in Springwells in the vicinity of the Grand Trunk Junction. "Cottages are springing up in every direction. An estimated one thousand cottages and houses will be built by fall." The Military Streets Study Area is approximately one-half mile from this location. It appears to have been developed in response to a need for worker housing to support all of the industry that was developing in the area. This included brickyards, nurseries, the railroad industry and, later, the automobile industry

Various Sanborn insurance maps show some of the businesses found in the Military Streets Study Area, including the Mitshkun Company, railway supplies and coal, located in the Mitshkun Subdivision; F.L. Lowrie Lumber Company's interior finish mill on Dix between Casgrain and Infantry Avenues; Detroit United Railway Street Car-Baker Street (Dix) car barn on the corner of Dragoon and West Vernor Highway; the Detroit Creamery Milk Depot on Dix at Cavalry Avenue; and the Michigan Refining Corporation on Waterman and Desmond Avenues.

The railroad industry was quite prominent in the district. Tracks for the Michigan Central Railroad and Lakeshore and Michigan Southern Railroad ran directly between Mitshkun and Clark Subdivisions near West Vernor Highway and Waterman Avenue. Just outside the

boundaries of West Vernor Highway, dozens of railroad tracks converged at the huge Michigan Central Railroad Car Shops. The Baker Street Trolley ran directly between the Michigan Central RR station and Ford's Rouge Plant.

Detroit city directories of various years show the railroad as the largest employer in the study area. In the earlier directories, the listed occupations of many of the residents include conductors, brakemen, switchmen, machinists, teamsters, operators, and engineers. It is likely that some of these residents were employed by the street car companies which were also prevalent in the area. A few bricklayers also resided in the study area, due to the abundance of brickyards in the region. By 1910, the directories list residents associated with the automobile industry. Some residents are listed as working for wheel manufacturers, and as installers and machine operators. The usual occupations of clerks, saloon owners, postal workers, laborers, and merchants are included throughout the early years in the study area.

It appears that people of many nationalities populated the study area. The "Springwells Notes" section of the Detroit Free Press detailed the day-to-day events and court cases in the area. Based on a tiny article about local court cases in the August 20, 1876 edition, there apparently was a small population of African-Americans in the area. According to the Detroit City Directory of 1889, the majority of the population appears to be a mixture of British, Scotch, German, and Irish, with very few Polish and French. The region saw a large influx of immigrants during World War I, with many people moving to Detroit to work in the war plants. A large population of Scotch and Irish made it necessary to build an addition on the local school (Amos) in 1908. By 1925, more French had moved into the area, as well as a few Italian residents. A survey taken in the 1940s at Southwestern High School found that there were thirty-six nationalities in attendance. Beard School began enrolling its first African-American students around 1957, and by 1961 the school had three African-American teachers.

The Military Streets Study Area consists of fifteen subdivisions platted between 1869 and 1916. Below is a chronological listing of the major subdivisions and the years platted:

1869	Daniel Scotten's Resubdivision
1875	Clark's Subdivision
1890	Woodruff's Subdivision
1890	Aberle's Subdivision
1894	Stenton's Subdivision
1901	Kennedy Subdivision
1906	Fahndrich's Subdivision
1907	Casgrain's Subdivision
1908	Holden and Murray's Subdivision
1910	Kaier's Subdivision (#1)
1911	A. J. Stuart's Fort Street Subdivision
1912	Kaier's Subdivision (#2)
1914	Mitshkun's Subdivision
1914	Hamilton's Subdivision (#1)
c. 1916	Hamilton's Subdivision (#2)

Detroit realtors, bankers, lawyers, and entrepreneurs platted most of the subdivisions in

the Military Streets Study Area. More than half of the Military Streets Study Area was developed by Daniel Scotten (1819-1899) with his wife, Elizabeth. Scotten made his fortune in the tobacco manufacturing industry and increased his wealth many fold with his business acumen. Scotten's Resubdivision was the first subdivision developed; the huge subdivision was platted in 1869 between W. Vernor Highway and West Fort Street on Infantry, Livernois, Dragoon, Military, and Cavalry Avenues. While the subdivision was resubdivided several times, the name remained the same.

Clark's Subdivision, platted in 1875 by banker Lorenzo E. Clark and his wife Elizabeth, was the second largest subdivision developed in the Military Streets Study Area. It was located on Waterman, Rademacher, Casgrain, and Infantry Avenues between Michigan Central Railroad and Regular Avenue. Clark was one of the founders of the State Bank of Michigan and the First National Bank. Kennedy Subdivision was platted by another banker, George E. Lawson (1861-1916). Lawson, who was born in Howell, Michigan, had a long association with People's State Bank, rising from bookkeeper of its predecessor, People's Savings Bank, to president.

The next six subdivisions were all developed along Crawford Avenue. Woodruff's Subdivision on the east side of Crawford Avenue between Army Avenue and just south of Lafayette Avenue, and Aberle's Subdivision on the west side of Crawford Avenue between West Fort Street and Army Avenue, were platted in 1890. Elias Aberle was a realtor. Samuel Crawford, the street's namesake who was also involved with Aberle's Sub, was in the real estate business, specializing in acreage and factory property. Fremont Woodruff was an attorney who was also Chairman of the Board of Stevens Land Company, Ltd., and the treasurer of the Iron-Silver Mining Company in Leadville, Colorado. Woodruff sold the subdivision to George DuCharme, a real estate entrepreneur and president and treasurer of the United States Heater Company, just one year after it was platted. DuCharme's father, Charles DuCharme, was a descendant of two of the oldest families in America; the DuCharmes of France and the Bartholomews of England.

Stenton's Subdivision was platted in 1894 by brothers Frederick F. Stenton, an oil dealer, and George Stenton, salesman, on the east side of Crawford Avenue between West Fort Street and a few lots north of the Fisher Freeway. The next subdivision was platted in 1901 (Kennedy's Subdivision) on Crawford Avenue between Regular and Army Avenues. Casgrain's Subdivision was platted by Annie H. Casgrain in 1907 on Rademacher and Casgrain Avenues between Fort Street and just south of Army Avenue. Just a year later in 1908, Holden and Murray's Subdivision, with only ten lots, was platted on Livernois Avenue from West Fort Street to just north of it. James S. Holden partnered with Daniel E. Murray in 1907 to form the Murray and Holden Real Estate Company. Besides being a realtor, Holden was an attorney with a degree from the Detroit College of Law, a banker at Michigan Savings Bank and Wayne County Savings Bank, and secretary-treasurer and one of the founders of Demery and Company department stores.

Anton Kaier, developer of two Kaier's Subdivisions, was a realtor and an insurance executive. The first Kaier's Subdivision (1) was platted in 1910, on Waterman and Rademacher Avenues between West Fort Street and Lafayette Avenue. A. J. Stuart's Fort Street Subdivision was platted by banker and real estate entrepreneur Alexander J. Stuart on Waterman, Rademacher, and Casgrain Avenues from Regular Avenue to just south of it, in 1911. The second Kaier's Avenue Subdivision (2) was platted in 1912 on Waterman and Rademacher Avenues from Lafayette Avenue to a few lots north of Army Avenue, and in an L-shape over to

Casgrain Avenue between a few lots north and south of Lafayette Avenue.

At the northern tip of the Military Streets Study Area is the Mitshkun's Subdivision, platted in 1914 in the triangle of Livernois, West Vernor Highway, and the Michigan Central Railroad tracks by Kales Realty Company. The owners, James T. Whitehead and William R. Kales, also owned several companies which specialized in manufacturing structural steel for bridges and buildings. The subdivision was immediately sold to The Mitshkun Company, owned by siblings Mark, Maurice, and Sarah Mitshkun. The Mitshkun Company specialized in buying and selling complete logging railways to lumbermen and loggers in United States and Canada.

Hamilton's Subdivision (1) was also platted in 1914, on Waterman Avenue in the middle six lots between Regular and Lafayette Avenues and the alley west of Rademacher Avenue. Entrepreneur Ralph E. Hamilton, of Hamilton and Sons, was a concrete worker and a coal miner. His sons, Thomas and William, platted an addition to Hamilton's Sub in 1916 after their father's death, advancing east from the alley west of Rademacher Avenue to the alley east of Casgrain. R.E. Hamilton's Sons claimed to be the largest concrete product manufacturer in Michigan, according to an advertisement for its builders' supply business in the 1921 Detroit City Directory. Thomas Hamilton's home was at 1264 Waterman, his brother George's home was at 1268 Waterman, and the brothers' builders' supply business was first located at 1280 Waterman.

Architecture

The housing stock in the Military Streets Study Area consists of mostly single and multi-family detached middle-class residences in styles typical of the period, including vernacular Victorian, Foursquare, Arts and Crafts, Bungalow and Colonial Revival. Baist's 1923 Atlas shows that buildings were mostly of frame construction under wooden sheathing, with a few brick veneer structures. The building pattern is predominantly one and one-half and two-story frame construction throughout the district except Casgrain's Subdivision and both Kaier's Subdivisions, which have mostly brick structures with an occasional frame building. Most of these brick structures are duplexes of foursquare design. Lafayette Avenue has several two-story brick terraces. Most of the garages in the study area were constructed in the early to mid-1920s.

The oldest brick house in the Military Streets Study Area is the one at 831 Waterman Avenue (fig. 1). Although no building permit can be found for the one and one-half story Victorian structure, the property on which it sits once belonged to Daniel Scotten, who purchased it from Francis and Cynthia Crawford in 1864 and sold it to gardener Charles Fahndrich and his wife, Wilhemine, in 1880. Fahndrich is listed in the 1885 Detroit city directory as residing on the west side of Waterman Avenue, north of Fort Street. Wilhemine died in 1905, and in 1906, Charles Fahndrich and his children platted the land as Fahndrich Subdivision. In 1913, Amelia King purchased the brick house and owned it until her death in 1938. She added a two-story addition to the rear of the house in 1922 consisting of a kitchen and two bedrooms.

Concrete block can be found as a building material on many of the houses in the Military Streets Study Area. Most prevalent is the abundance of concrete block garages, foundations and porches, but there are a few buildings that are completely constructed of it as well. Concrete block, also referred to as cast stone, cement or cinder block, is a twentieth century phenomenon. It is made from a mixture of Portland cement and aggregates. The blocks are formed by placing a wet or dry mixture in a mold, tamping it to pack it into shape, and curing it, either in or out of the mold, depending on the mixture that is used. In the early 1900s, concrete blocks were manufactured in molds filled by hand. By the 1930s machines could make multiple blocks, and

by the 1940s the process was fully automated from mixing to curing. A major change came around 1917, when lightweight aggregates were introduced to correct the problem of weight. Block sizes were once varied, but in 1924, the manufacturers agreed on a common standard of 8" x 8" x 16". Concrete block was promoted as a lightweight structural material that was inexpensive, easy to lay, could be hammered into, required very little maintenance, and was fireproof. Blocks are usually hollow with flat or beveled ends, and early block machines came with face plates that imitated cobblestone, brick, and ashlar, as well as ornamental scrolls, wreaths, and roping. The most popular of all block styles was rock faced, because the rough cut surface looked like quarried stone. It was standard on all machines from 1900 to 1930.

The growth in the block industry in the first two decades of the twentieth century was phenomenal. Blocks were so popular that before 1915 nearly 75% of them were used for foundations, basement walls or partition walls. Partition walls were often plain faced, as were exterior walls covered with brick or stucco. Sometimes coloring pigments were added to the mix. While the number of blocks produced in the United States increased, the number of manufacturing plants decreased. In 1919, fifty million blocks were produced in the U.S. By 1928, that number increased to 387 million, and by 1951 it was at 1.6 billion. Meanwhile, with automation, the number of plants decreased from 7,000 in 1920 to 4,140 in 1928. The industry was consolidating into large manufacturers that increasingly became connected with ready mix concrete companies. Changes in taste and technology in the 1930s led the concrete block industry to shift to more utilitarian uses.

It is likely that much of the area's concrete block was manufactured locally. The 1922 Baist Atlas depicts a concrete products company on northwest corner of Cadet and Rademacher. Early 1920s city directories identify R.E. Hamilton's Sons builders' supply establishment located on the abovementioned site, addressed as 1791 Rademacher, likely having moved from 1280 Rademacher, its original location, about 1922.

The construction of housing in the Military Street Study Area parallels all of the trends that were occurring with the concrete block industry. The 1910 Sanborn insurance map depicts the earliest concrete block houses in the study area. The first were located at 745 and 757 Casgrain Avenue. Built in 1909, both were among the houses demolished in 1965 when the Fisher Freeway came through. The 1923 Sanborn insurance map depicts an abundance of concrete block garages in the study area, apparently a result of the growth of the automobile industry. By 1914 Ford had developed the moving assembly line, and by the early 1920s the price of the Model T had dropped from \$850.00 (1908 price) to \$290.00, making it affordable to the masses. The concrete garage was an inexpensive yet safe structure in which to house these new treasures. A small number of concrete block houses were depicted on the 1923 map as well. Based on building permits, many of these houses were built between 1910 and 1915 and are listed as frame dwellings with concrete block foundations and basements.

Most of the houses in the study area are in the Arts and Crafts style, which was popular during this period. A great number of the Victorian houses have concrete foundations and basements, and to a lesser degree, porches. Building permits show that most of them are not original to the house, but were added later. Numerous building permits, dated from 1919 to the early 1940s, were approved to make these structural changes. Many styles of concrete block can be found in the Study Area. Most prevalent are the rock faced and plain with beveled edges. A few cobblestone facings can also be found, as well a few stucco houses. Some of the more decorative porches are made of blocks with recessed centers, cast concrete in ornamental shapes,

and low piers crowned by large round concrete finials. A few houses used a concrete block patterned tin to enclose the open foundation, rather than go through the expense and trouble of adding a new foundation or basement. Due to the ease of nailing, some of the concrete block houses have been altered with the application of wood or vinyl siding.

1045 Crawford Avenue is one of the few concrete block houses left unchanged in the Military Streets Study Area (fig. 2). Contractor Charles Van Blarcoun, built the two-story Arts and Crafts house in 1910. The rock-faced concrete block house features an attractive porch with decorative cast concrete columns, posts, and railings over an open foundation screened by cast concrete stacked in an open weave pattern.

Contractor James A. Gibson and Son (Walter) built several houses in the study area. Gibson also lived in the study area, first on Dragoon Avenue and later at 1151 Artillery Avenue. A common characteristic of his houses are the distinctive porches. The houses at 1080, 1086, 1092 and 1098 Military Avenue were all built in 1910 (fig. 3). Gibson built the two-story frame houses on brick foundations, all very different from one another, in the Arts and Crafts style. They have a variety of details that include hipped roofs, dormers, and leaded glass windows, and two-story bay windows. 1092 has been severely altered, but the other three houses have retained their historic charm. All three houses have unique rock face concrete block porches featuring interesting cast concrete columns, piers, posts and railings. Gibson also built the Colonial Revival house at 1259 Cavalry Avenue in 1911. The two-story frame house on a rock face concrete block foundation has a front facing gambrel roof and Gibson's signature concrete block porch with cast concrete details. Brick duplexes at 1708 Livernois Avenue and 1739 Cavalry Avenue are very similar in styling and Gibson applied for the permits for both buildings on April 14, 1914 (fig. 4). Both buildings have an Italian Renaissance influence at the flat roofline which features brackets supporting an overhanging cornice. The cornice and brackets at the Military Avenue house have since fallen off. Both houses also have the signature Gibson and Son concrete block porches, with columns supporting second-story balconies.

Banker and real estate entrepreneur Alexander J. Stuart applied for the permit for the concrete block terraces at 1320-1328 Rademacher Avenue (fig. 5). They were constructed in 1913 in the Arts and Crafts style, featuring a hipped roof, hipped dormers and gables over second story bay windows. Unfortunately, the building has been altered above the foundation with the application of vinyl siding. Several stucco walls may have been original to the building. The three terrace porches are completely constructed of rock face concrete blocks, including the sturdy square columns supporting the overhanging flat roof.

The one and one-half story frame Colonial Revival cottage at 1400 Cavalry Avenue was built c. 1909-10 (fig. 6). Following the trend that was popular in the area at the time, a new concrete block basement and front porch were added in 1922. Cobblestone face blocks were used for the foundation and between piers of rock face blocks on the porch, resulting in an appealing front façade.

Architect Frank. E. Brotherton designed the concrete block apartment building at 1299 Rademacher Avenue (fig. 7). The U-shaped, two-story structure has a raised basement and was built in 1917 in the Arts and Crafts style. It has a low, flat hipped roof, and a two and one-half story bow windows, crowned with bowed hood moldings, on the front façade of each wing. An interior courtyard leads to the centrally located entrance of the building. The raised basement and first story of the building are rock faced concrete block, while the slightly overhanging second story is stucco. Of particular note, Just one block west of the Waterman Avenue

boundary of the Military Streets Study Area is Olivet Presbyterian Church (fig 8). Located at 707 Lewerenz Avenue, between W. Fort Street and the Fisher Freeway Service Drive, the elegant structure is completely constructed of smooth concrete blocks with a rock-faced foundation. Light and dark shades of concrete blocks have been used as a decorative element as well. While the church is constructed primarily of darker blocks, lighter blocks are used for quoining on corners and around windows, the water table, string courses and decorative banding on chimneys. Erection of the building was a project undertaken by the Church Extension Board of Detroit Presbytery. Ground was broken in April 1913, the cornerstone was laid on July 17, 1913, and the church's dedication was made on Easter Sunday of 1914. It was constructed at a total cost of \$22,000, including the cost of the land. The church actually began as an army camp mission in the guard house at historic Fort Wayne in 1901. It started as a Sunday school and, in 1906, grew into Fort Wayne Church at the corner of South and Artillery Avenues. Fort Wayne Church congregation later merged with the Woodmere Mission congregation. Woodmere Mission started in a store on W. Fort Street in 1907. The congregation outgrew the store, so they moved to the Woodmere Cemetery Crematorium Chapel. When the Olivet Presbyterian opened, both congregations consolidated to become one. In the late 1990's the building was owned by the Seventh Day Adventist. It is currently occupied by the congregation of Old Landmark Church of God in Christ.

There are other noteworthy churches in the area, although not of concrete block. The Military Street Presbyterian Church was built in 1901 by contractor William H. Smith (fig. 9). Few changes have been made to the white wood frame building since it was constructed. The church has retained the same congregation since its inception. Pentecostal Temple Baptist Church at the corner of Livernois and Regular was originally called the Church of the Ascension. The original congregation built the dark red brick structure in 1915. Contractor Ricardo D. French built the attached pastor's residence in 1923.

Another noteworthy building in the study area, located on the northeast corner of Waterman and Lafayette across from Beard School, is the Masonic Temple (fig. 10). It housed the G.I. Forum, an organization that has significance to the Hispanic community of Detroit.

A commercial area has developed along West Vernor Highway between Livernois and Cavalry Avenues (fig. 11). Today the street features fast food restaurants, Mexican Restaurants, automobile service garages, gas stations, and other small businesses. West Vernor Highway between Livernois and Waterman Avenues has mostly light industrial buildings. West Fort Street has a less intact commercial area with many of the same types of establishments and a few corner store-type businesses (fig.12). Lafayette Avenue has a sprinkling of small businesses including a grocery store, corner stores, and automobile service garages.

The Transamerican Freight Lines Building was constructed in 1946 at 1700 Waterman Avenue near W. Vernor Highway (fig. 13). The brick and concrete two-story Art Moderne office building and dock was built by Thomas Keim at a cost of \$140,000. The building presently houses the offices of a public health agency.

The Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the land on the northwest corner of Dragoon and Cadet, where the Baker Street-Street Car Depot once stood, in 1930. According to the Wayne County Tract Index Record, the Detroit United Railway System fell upon hard times during the Depression and was sued by the United States Treasury Department for back taxes. A brick shelter was built on the property in 1934 as CWA Project #9, Job #1. The land now serves as a playground called Boyer Playfield (fig.14).

Institutional structures were also developed to serve the community. No longer standing is the Amos School on Regular and Military Avenues. Built in 1895, the grammar school was named for Ferdinand Amos, an alderman in the sixteenth ward (1886-91), who was largely instrumental in getting the school built. He was the proprietor of the Amos House, a hotel across from the New York Central Depot on Junction Avenue. The twelve room, two-story school received a six room addition in 1908 when the student body outgrew the building. In 1899, the land adjacent to the school was turned into a drill ground for the Spanish-American War. It later became the Amos School playground. Detroit's former mayor, Albert Cobo, and his brother, Edward, were among some of the more prominent students who attended the school. Amos School was torn down in 1977. The Department of Parks and Recreation purchased the land in 1981 and developed the Military-Regular Playfield.

The Frank H. Beard School, designed by prominent Detroit school architects, Malcomson & Higginbotham, was built in 1896 (fig.15). Located on Waterman Avenue near the Fisher Freeway, it is one of the last late nineteenth century public schools in Detroit, and one of the least altered. Though no longer housing a school, the Beard School building, which is locally designated, continues to serve the community.

Southwestern High School (fig. 16), located on the southwest corner of Fort Street and Waterman Avenue, was constructed in 1916 as Nordstrum High School. Named after John Nordstrum, who served on the Board of Education in Delray for fifteen years, the school was originally located in Delray before the area was annexed to Detroit. It sat on thirteen and one-half acres, serving 550 students in grades seven through twelve. In 1922, when Nordstrum became overcrowded due to the rapid growth Detroit experienced as a result of World War I, a new building was added and the school became Southwestern High School. It became a four year high school in 1933. The school received one and two story additions in 1968, making it one of the city's largest high schools. Southwestern continues to serve as the community high school.

The James Valentine Campbell Branch of the Detroit Public Library was originally called Branch 8 (fig.17) It opened in a rented store adjoining a butcher shop on West End Avenue near West Jefferson, on September 1, 1907. The library was also known as the Del Ray Branch and the West Fort Street Branch. It was moved around the corner to 3327 West Jefferson in January of 1910 when the butcher shop flies got to be more than the library users and staff could tolerate. In September of 1913, the library moved once again to 1503 West Fort. The current structure, at 6625 West Fort Street, between Waterman and Rademacher Avenues, was named in honor of James Valentine Campbell (1823-90), the first president of the Detroit Library Commission, elected in 1881. Designed in a modified Jacobethan Revival style, the library is a large, rectangular, two story structure of beige, rusticated Indiana limestone trimmed in masonry. It was constructed by the architectural firm of Stratton and Snyder in 1921. The James Valentine Campbell Branch Library on West Fort Street is currently closed due to roof damage. The library has set up an annex nearby at Holy Redeemer Cultural Center, 5671 W. Vernor.

In 1964, the north-south bound Fisher Freeway (Interstate 75) came through the area, removing some of the residences in subdivisions between West Fort Street and Lafayette Avenue. Subdivisions that this affected were Kaier's, Casgrain's, Stenton's, Holden and Murray's, Aberle's, and two of Scotten's Resubdivisions.

Though the Military Streets Study Area appears to have suffered from some loss of investment, the overall condition of the neighborhood is fair. Home ownership has shifted,

resulting in homeowners-in-residence and many rental dwellings. The maintenance of property in the Study Area varies from meticulous upkeep to outright neglect. Housing demolition has somewhat compromised the integrity of the area, with some streets more intact than others. Several open spaces now occupy what is still a bustling residential area. The district also suffers from vacancies due to fire damage, vandalism, abandonment and demolition by neglect over the years. The commercial areas on West Vernor Highway and West Fort Street have also lost several of their original structures. Various new businesses have filled many of the empty spaces on West Vernor Highway, while West Fort Street has several gaps between structures. This condition varies from block to block. Of the primary resources that remain in the Military Streets Study Area, approximately 1,062 are residential, 700 are out buildings, eighty-seven are commercial and twelve are institutional.

Evaluation/Recommendations

The staff of the Historic Designation Advisory Board is recommending that all of the properties within the following boundaries, as shown on the attached map, are eligible for the National Register under Criteria C in the area of architecture:

On the east, the centerline of the north-south alley lying east of Cavalry Avenue;
on the south, the north side right-of-way of the Fisher Freeway (I-75);
on the west, the centerline of the north-south alley lying west of Waterman Avenue; and
on the north, beginning at a point defined as the centerline of the east-west alley lying south of and behind West Vernor Highway at its intersection with the centerline of the north-south alley lying east of Cavalry Avenue; thence west and northwest along centerline of West Vernor Highway to its intersection with the centerline of Casgrain; thence south along the centerline of Casgrain to its intersection with the centerline of Desmond, thence west along the centerline of Desmond to its intersection with the centerline of Rademacher; thence south along the centerline of Rademacher to its intersection with the north line of Lot 217 of Clark's Subdivision, extended east and west (Liber 4, Page 24), thence west along said lot line, as extended, to its intersection with the centerline of Waterman; thence south along the centerline of Waterman to its intersection with the centerline of Goldsmith, thence west to its intersection with said western boundary.

Found within the Military Streets Study Area is a concentration of the new material - machine molded concrete block - adapted to modest vernacular housing types typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is likely that the material was manufactured locally, given the history of brick making and builders' supply businesses in Springwells, and at least one concrete block manufacturer involved with subdivision development in the study area. Late Victorian houses were raised onto concrete block foundations, concrete block porches were added to earlier houses and were original to early twentieth century houses, and a few totally concrete block houses and a church exist in the study area. Concrete block garages are abundant. The housing stock not featuring concrete block is typical of modest, middle class housing of the period.

The area defined above excludes the commercial thoroughfares of West Vernor and Fort Street. The SHPO previously evaluated West Vernor in the context of the West Vernor Intensive

Level Survey (2001, Cornerstone Building company, for Southwest Housing Corporation) and determined it to be “not eligible” for the National Register. The Historic Designation Advisory Board staff opinion is that Fort Street within the survey area is also “not eligible.”

The following individual buildings were found to be “eligible” for the National Register by Historic Designation Advisory Board staff under criteria: A and C (social history and architecture):

Beard School, 840 Waterman
Campbell Library, 6625 W. Fort St.
Masonic Temple, corner of West Lafayette and Waterman
Southwestern High School, 6921 W. Fort St.
Olivet Baptist Church, 717 Lewerenz

Building Permits, Department of Safety & Engineering, City of Detroit.

Burton, C. M., City of Detroit, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Detroit-Chicago, 1922, 1930.
vol. 1-5.

Detroit City Directories, various years.

Detroit Free Press, "Day's Illness Brings Death to Widow of Daniel Scotten" February 18, 1910.

"George E. Lawson," February 16, 1916.

"Deputies Dodge Hot Coffee to Arrest Former Banker," May 17, 1933.

"Stuart's Story Held Contempt," June 1, 1933.

"Banker, 88, faces quiz on Maiullo," December 8, 1948.

"A Class Act-The Life and Times of Southwestern High School," June 26, 1988.

Detroit News, "A Tired Old Man Reaches the End of a Weary Road," May 18, 1933.

"Released - In Jail 8 Months," January 25, 1934.

"Church Celebrates Twentieth Anniversary," April 9, 1934.

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December 12, 2001

Kristine Kidorf
City of Detroit
Historic District Commission
Planning & Development Dept.
1300 Cadillac Tower
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Military Streets Study Area

Dear Ms. Kidorf:

I am submitting a reconnaissance level survey report on the area south of West Vernor Highway, west of Cavalry, north of Fort Street and east of Waterman, referred to as the Military Streets Study Area, for your review.

This report was prepared by the staff of the Historic Designation Advisory Board in accordance with its responsibilities under the Programmatic Agreement. Survey and historical research activities were undertaken by this office, and a favorable conclusion of National Register eligibility was reached for the majority of the study area. We would be happy to accompany you, your staff and/or the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office on a tour of the area if necessary, and we are available to answer questions regarding our recommendations as usual.

If appropriate, I am requesting that you forward the information to the State Historic Preservation Office for its official comments and concurrence with the findings regarding national register eligibility of the area covered in this report.

I can be reached at (313) 224-1896 if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Deborah M. Goldstein
Historic Designation Supervisory Specialist

