

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

Historic Designation Advisory Board

FINAL REPORT

Proposed Berry Subdivision Historic District

The proposed historic district is located between East Jefferson Avenue and the Detroit River, between Holcomb Avenue and the Stanton Canal. The area consists mostly of single family houses; the proposed district also contains some multiple residential uses, a City of Detroit pumping station, a city park, and a considerable quantity of vacant land.

BOUNDARIES: The proposed district consists of the entire Joseph H. Berry Subdivision, the property along the east side of Parkview, and part of two lots of the Albert Crane Subdivision. The proposed boundaries are:

On the North: The centerline of East Jefferson Avenue.

On the West: The westerly boundary of the Joseph H. Berry Subdivision from East Jefferson Avenue south to Dwight Blvd., thence westerly and then southerly along the north and west boundaries of the property described as:

The south 400 feet of the east 93 feet at right angles to the east line of lots 6 and 7, Albert Crane Subdivision.

On the South: The Detroit River

On the East: A line 148.84 feet east of the easterly line of Parkview Drive, drawn parallel to the easterly line of Parkview.

HISTORY: The history of Berry Subdivision reflects the economic history of Detroit in the years from the beginning of the automobile industry to the Great Depression.

Some development took place within the proposed district prior to the automobile, however. Park View, as it was then called, is listed in the city directories in the mid-1890's, though no addresses indicate the existence of buildings. On September 22, 1898, a building permit was issued to architect Louis Kamper for a large two story brick dwelling. This house, built for Detroit clothing manufacturer Marvin M. Stanton, is a fantastic assemblage of towers, turrets, crenelations and roofs, and is today popularly known as "The Castle". The coach house on the property follows the house in design, and is just as interesting for its eccentricities.

Next door to the Stanton house stands a white clapboard house with classical portico once occupied by Marvin L. Stanton, son of Marvin M. Stanton. No building permit has been located for this house, which is shown in the 1906 city directory, but may date earlier. In style, it certainly belongs to the late nineteenth century "Colonial Revival" rather than to the later neo-Georgian modes. A newspaper reference in the mid-1890's to a house to be built on Park View, designed by the Detroit architect A.C. Varney may be suggestive; yet this house is traditionally ascribed to Kamper, who is known to have designed the father's house next door. The Varney project may not have come to fruition.

In 1910, two more buildings were built on Park View. One, a two-and-a-half story house, (488 Parkview), was apparently built by M.L. Stanton to the south of his own residence. In 1918, the house was occupied by Edgar M. Gregory, who was connected with both Gregory, Mayer & Thom (office supplies), and the Gregory boating interests. The other building, almost at the river, is the Fairview Pumping Station, designed for the city water system by Smith, Hinchman, & Grylls.

On July 14, 1914, the Common Council accepted the plat of the Joseph H. Berry Subdivision. The daughters of Joseph H. Berry, who had inherited the land from their father, had decided to develop a subdivision of high quality single family houses. Previously existing streets were vacated, except for Parkview, the eastern boundary, which was widened by ten feet. Fiske, Lodge, and Dwight were opened, and lots offered for sale. Restrictive covenants still in force today, were attached to each deed. These required single family dwellings of brick, stone, or concrete, of not less than two stories in height, with requirements for setbacks and side yard spaces.

Building began in 1916, with the house at 495 Lodge, designed by the architect Roland Gies, who had formerly been in the partnership of Grylls & Gies, prior to the formation of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls. Houses continued to be built, though somewhat slowly, and the majority of the houses in the subdivision date from the 1920's. Particularly notable is the row of seven residences on Dwight, on the river frontage. The five westernmost houses in the row were all built for members of the Weber family, and designed by architect Joseph P. Jogerst. The easternmost house, built in 1927 for General Charles W. Harrah, was later owned by Alex Manoogian, and is now the official residence of the mayors of Detroit.

While many fine homes were built in the 1920's, it appears that the Great Depression ended the Berry sisters' hopes for completion of development. Many lots passed into governmental ownership, and while a number of houses have been built since 1929, (3.9% of the houses in the proposed district date from 1930 to 1942, and 25% after World War II) 44 of the 118 lots on Berry Subdivision proper have never been built upon. Twenty-four of those are owned by adjoining householders and used as part of the homeowner's property, frequently as landscaped side lots. This has created a feeling of openness in the subdivision. In addition, four of the riverfront lots are a dedicated park, located on Dwight between Lodge and Parkview, and named for David F. Stockton, a World War II hero.

Several architects well-known for their work in Detroit are represented in Berry Subdivision. Particularly notable, in addition to those mentioned above, are the work of Donaldson & Meier (325, 354, 400, 445, 475, and 535 Fiske), an additional house by Roland Gies (505 Lodge), and two houses by Robert O. Derrick (360 and 444 Lodge). No doubt other houses were also designed by architects, but the records give the contractor's name, which makes it extremely difficult to identify the architect.

Connections with families who were prominent in society, business, and civic activities are also present. Some have already been mentioned in connection with particular houses; others include John B. Ford, Jr. (360 Lodge), Frederick S. Ford (444 Lodge), both of the "chemical" Fords; Dr. Alexander Blain (494 Lodge), Arthur "Pop" Clamage of burlesque fame (541 Lodge) and John Kay of Wright-Kay Jewelers (400 Fiske). Political figures favor the subdivision, particularly in more recent times; a notable example is long-time City Clerk Thomas Leadbetter (545 Lodge).

The Berry Subdivision Association has long been active in encouraging the maintenance of the neighborhood, and has been the major force behind the defense of the restrictive covenants of the subdivision. The Berry Subdivision Association requested the study of designation which has resulted in this report.

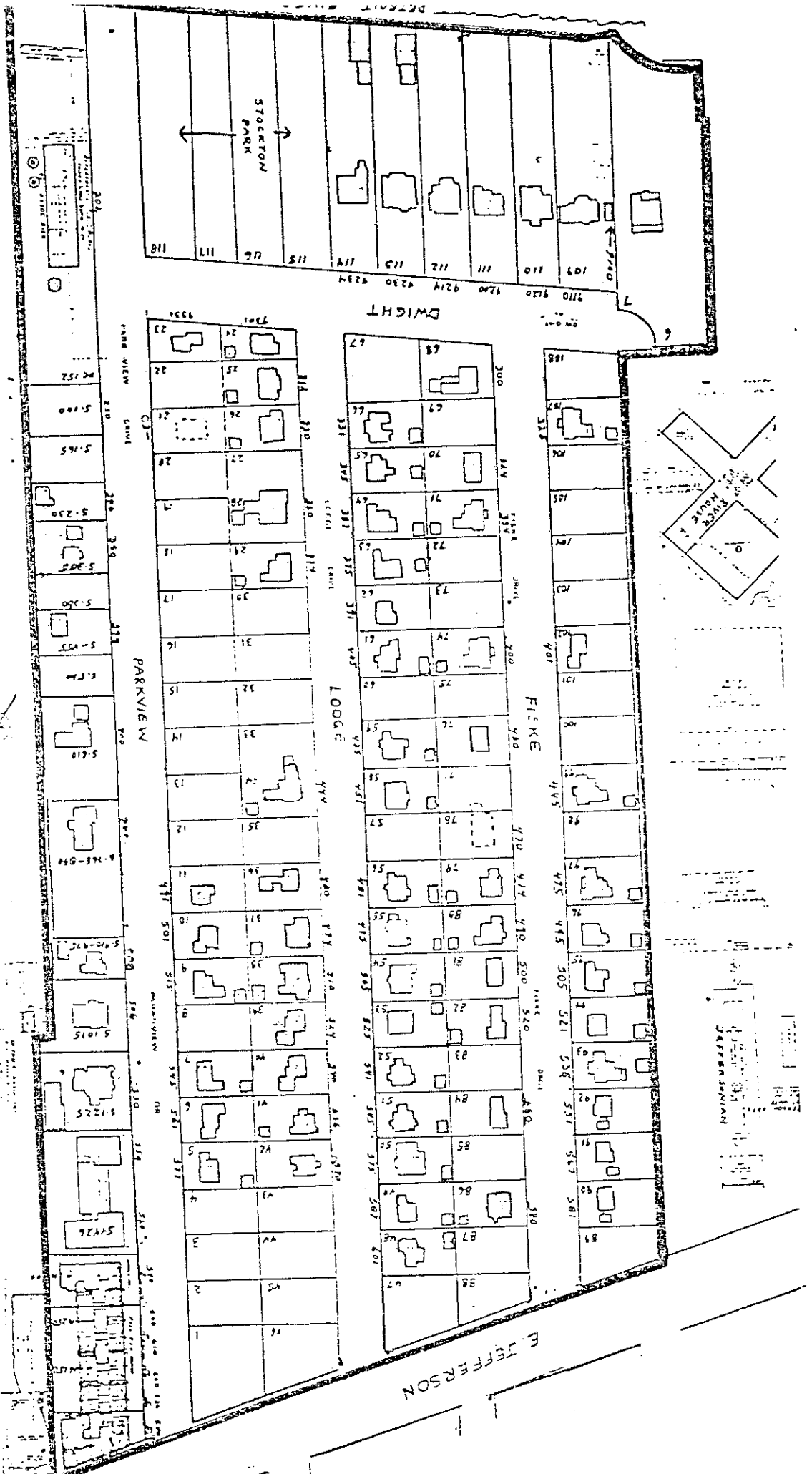
ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION: Berry Subdivision is a typical urban development, with straight streets bounding rectangular blocks. The houses of the historical development are typical of the upper-middle to upper income residence of the period from 1916 to 1929. Styles range from the neo-Georgian to various substyles derived from medieval precedent. There are several notable examples of houses designed in a "Mediterranean" style, with light brick or stone, and red tile roofs. Influences from the Prairie style can be found, and some buildings that can only be described as vernacular. Later houses have tended strongly to the "Colonial" derivation, while others are in the contemporary vernacular.

"The Castle" would be a valuable example of the late nineteenth century vogue for fortress and chateau architecture wherever it was located, and the Marvin L. Stanton house next door is a valuable and graceful example of the "Colonial Revival". The pumping station at the foot of Parkview represents well the civic pretensions which became associated with this basically industrial building, since it was built for the city government. The row of houses on the river is particularly valuable, not only for their inherent architectural qualities, but also because they are the last riverfront houses in the city, and serve as a reminder of what once existed on Jefferson Avenue. The apartment houses at the north end of Parkview are typical and well-kept examples of multi-unit development of about 1920.

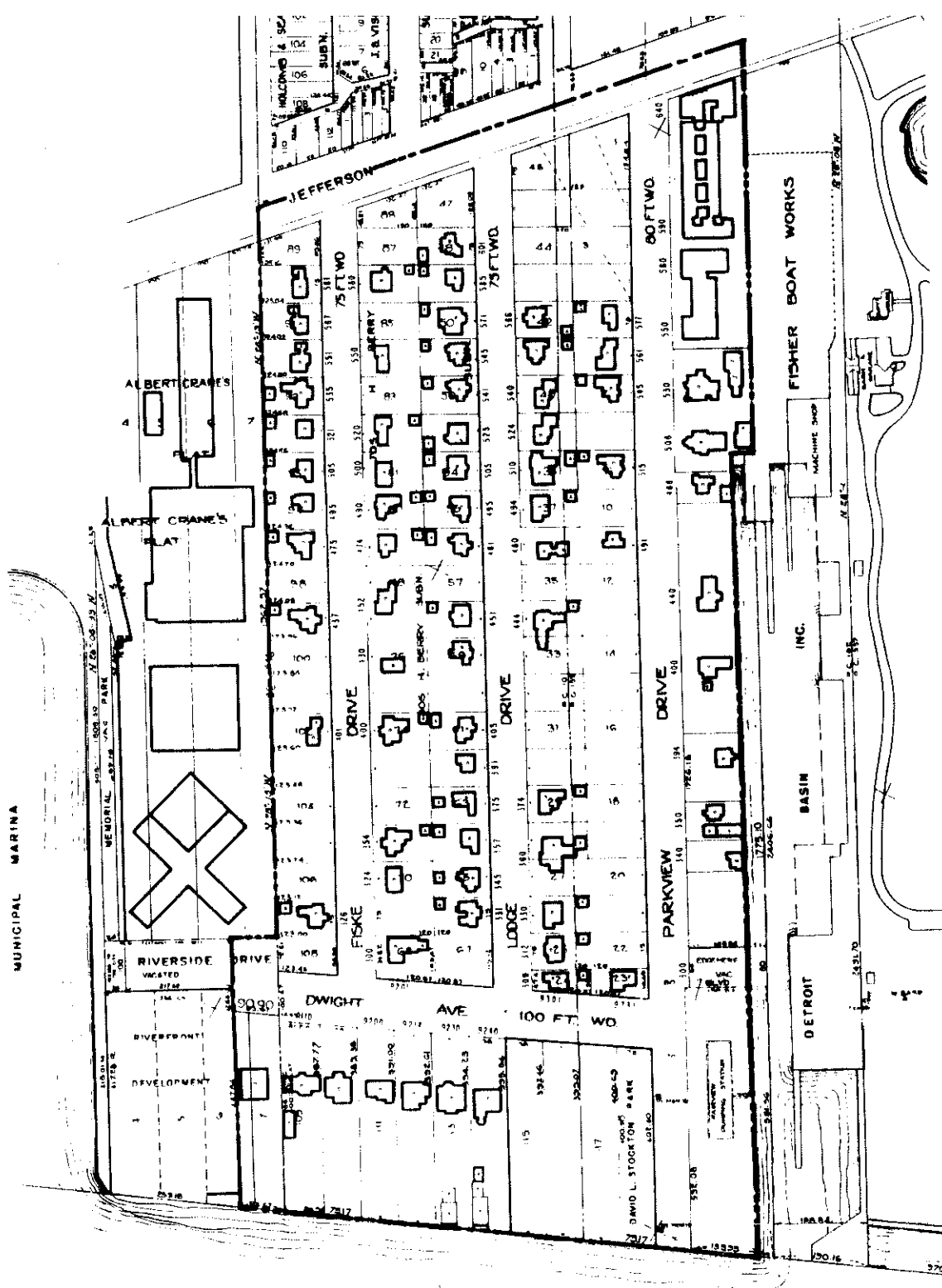
CRITERIA: The Historic District Ordinance provides four criteria for evaluation of proposed historic districts. These criteria are alternatives, and if a proposed district meets any one of them, it is eligible for designation. The Historic Designation Advisory Board finds that the proposed Berry Subdivision Historic District meets criteria 1, 2, and 3, as given in Section 28A-1-2 (a), and that this fact is evident upon a reading of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Historic Designation Advisory Board, finding that the proposed Berry Subdivision Historic District meets three of the four criteria for designation given in Section 28A-1-2 (a), recommends that the City Council create by ordinance the Berry Subdivision Historic District, with the design treatment level of conservation. A draft ordinance is attached for Council's consideration.

MAP OF THE PROPOSED BERRY SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT
SHOWING PROPOSED BOUNDARIES IN HEAVY LINES



MUNICIPAL MARINA



CEDD

BERRY SUBDIVISION HISTORIC DISTRICT

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