

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received MAR 28 1982  
date entered MAY 6 1982

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name** City of Monroe Multiple Resource Area

historic N/A  
Historic Resources of the City of Monroe, Michigan  
and/or common (Partial Inventory: Historic and Architectural Properties)

**2. Location**

street & number Within the present city limits of Monroe N/A not for publication

city, town Monroe N/A vicinity of congressional district 2

state Michigan code 026 county Monroe code 115

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Ownership

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Monroe County Courthouse

city, town Monroe state Michigan 48161

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Michigan Inventory of  
title Historic Resources and... (continued) has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

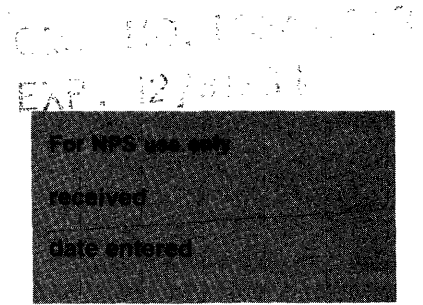
date Survey conducted: October, 1978--June 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Michigan History Division/Michigan Department State

city, town Lansing state Michigan 48161

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Historic American Building Survey

Survey Conducted: 1936  
Depository: Library of Congress  
HABS Archives  
Division of Prints and Photography  
Washington, D.C. 20540

Works Progress Administration

Survey Conducted: 1944  
Depository: Monroe County Historical Museum  
126 South Monroe Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161

19th Century Buildings of Monroe County, Michigan

Survey Conducted: 1973  
Depository: Monroe County Historical Museum  
126 South Monroe Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161

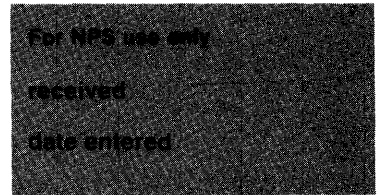
Michigan State Register of Historic Sites:

Depository: Michigan History Division  
Department of State  
Lansing, Michigan 48918

1. Johnson-Phinney House  
22 West Second Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 2/23/78
2. "McClelland House" -- Home of Governor Robert McClelland  
47 East Elm Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 9/3/71
3. Nims, Rudolph House  
206 West Noble Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 10/18/72
4. Sawyer House  
320 East Front Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 11/23/79

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Depository: National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

1. "McClelland House"  
47 East Elm Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 9/3/71
2. Nims, Rudolph House  
206 West Noble Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 10/18/72
3. Sawyer House  
320 East Front Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 11/23/77
4. Weis Manufacturing Company  
Union at W. Seventh Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
Listed: 10/26/81

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Michigan History Division has organized the information required for the Monroe Multiple Resource Nomination as follows:

Table of Contents

- Part I: Methodology for the Delineation of the Monroe Survey Area
- Part II: Methodology for the Delineation of the Monroe Multiple Resource Study Area
- Part III: Methodology for the Identification of Historic Districts and Individual Sites within the Monroe Multiple Resource Study Area
- Part IV: Description and Significance overview of the Multiple Resource Study Area
- Part V: Old Village Historic District, Description and Significance  
*MI 50 + MI 185*
- Part VI: East Elm-North Macomb Street Historic District, Description and Significance  
*Roughly bounded by River Raisin, Laramie, Monroe + Macomb Sts.*
- Part VII: St. Mary's Church Complex Historic District, Description and Significance  
*Elm Ave. + MI 125*
- Part VIII: St. Mary's Academy Complex Historic District, Description and Significance  
*Elm Ave.*
- Part IX: New York Central River Raisin Railroad Bridge, Description and Significance  
*off MI 50*
- Maps: #1 Monroe Multiple Resource Study Area illustrating Historic Districts and Individual Sites
- #2 Old Village Historic District
- #3 East Elm-North Macomb Street Historic District
- #4 St. Mary's Church Complex Historic District
- #5 St. Mary's Academy Complex Historic District
- Photographs: 110 Black and White (5 x 7) prints

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PART I: METHODOLOGY FOR THE DELINEATION OF THE MONROE SURVEY AREA

The methodology used in the Monroe Historical Survey reflects the contractual requirements of the State History Division as well as input at the local level. In addition, the methodology reflects the desire of the local administration to have all historical research, both in the survey as well as in the subsequent planning stages, be as relevant to the greatest number of users as possible. Local planners devised a methodology that would also address the broader City goals of stabilization and redevelopment. Information gathered through the survey would aid in the implementation of a variety of actions ranging from the enhancement of historic resources to the revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial areas.

All structures and known sites within the City of Monroe's boundaries (see Map #1) were investigated and a determination made as to whether or not their origins pre-dated 1930. Those structures and sites which pre-dated 1930 were then recorded in full, as will be described below, and now constitute the historical and architectural resources which make up the Monroe Historical Survey.

The basic organizational key to the Monroe Historical Survey is a property identification number based on a hierarchy of census tract, block number, and parcel number. This identification number constitutes a logical, sequential organization of City properties. It also constitutes the "entry number" into the City's computer files in which every type of field observation is coded and then deposited. Used in previous City inventories, this system has proven to be extremely accurate in identifying specific property locations and in lending itself well to computerized data handling and manipulation. Furthermore, utilization of this system allows all the material collected during the historic survey to be readily added to existing housing and land use files.

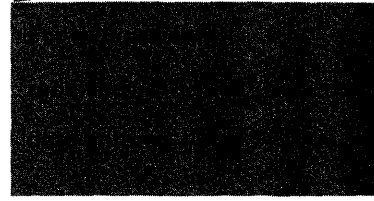
The pre-survey phase included several steps. First, field booklets were compiled, organized by census tract, which contained City atlas maps (tax maps), a block numbering map, blank History Division "field sheets," and an overall City map. These booklets were given to Historic Preservation students from the University of Michigan who were hired to conduct the actual "footwork" involved in the survey. Next, local staff held several briefing sessions to indoctrinate the students in local history and geography, to review terminology, and to explain the City's data codification system. When the survey began in the fall of 1978, staff members also accompanied the surveyors into the field to ensure that proper procedures were followed. The field work entailed filling out the History Division field sheets on site, recording additional information deemed necessary for City historical files, and recording surveyed structures on atlas maps for eventual transposition.

In addition to the State-required material, the Department of Community Development included five, equally relevant structural descriptors in the survey: architectural style, stylistic quality, structural condition, maintenance condition, and degree of alteration. First, by tapping the expertise of the student interns and/or numerous publications, most of the residential architectural styles were ascertained. For the remainder of the homes, in addition to several commercial and industrial structures, style was simply listed as Not Ascertainable. The second factor, stylistic quality, was a bit more elusive, con-

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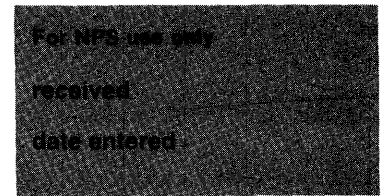
cerning itself with the original architectural intentions of the architect/builder. Here, the surveyor had to ignore any subsequent building alterations and attempt to focus on the original structure. Theoretically, he could then ascertain whether the building was truly indicative of a certain style, embracing its finer details and nuances, or whether it was merely a marginal copy. No doubt this is a very subjective exercise and its results will be used only to develop general trends or correlations. The third and fourth factors the City wished to address dealt with the structural and maintenance conditions of a building. Realizing there is a difference between the two and, for example a house could be freshly painted yet have serious structural faults, the surveyor was once again called upon to use subjective judgement. Finally, the surveyor was asked to evaluate the degree of alteration and make a determination as to its appropriateness or inappropriateness. For example, surveyors were asked to ascertain whether porches were enclosed or removed, or later additions constructed, that detracted or added to the original intentions of the style. With the exception of the architectural style category, the descriptors were evaluated on a grading system including four levels: excellent, good, fair or poor.

Placement of the survey data into the City's computerized data bank has ensured its continued use. The data has proved valuable in the delineation of National Register and local historic districts, and will in the near future be called upon and included as part of the City's overall preservation planning efforts. During the daily operations of the City's Community Development Office, the data is frequently called upon to assist local citizens who have questions concerning properties included in the survey. These are just a few of the ways in which the survey data is being utilized as an important planning tool instead of being filed away and forgotten, as is the case in many communities.

Due to the methodology formulated to meet both the State History Division and the City of Monroe program requirements, the survey progressed with minimal complication and error. Because of this, the City of Monroe and the State now have an accurate and accessible description of every structure and site in the City with pre-1930 origins.

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PART II: METHODOLOGY FOR THE DELINEATION OF THE MONROE MULTIPLE RESOURCE STUDY AREA

In October of 1979, the Monroe City Council accepted the recommendation of the Department of Community Development, as part of a National Register Planning and Survey Grant, and established a Historic District Study Committee for the City. Among other things, the Study Committee was given the task of working toward the nomination of historic districts and individual sites to the National Register of Historic Places. After careful consideration, committee members determined that use of the new Multiple Resource Nomination format, as explained by the Michigan History Division, would be the most effective way to nominate Monroe's significant cultural resources to the National Register.

The City of Monroe's Department of Community Development, as part of the National Register Grant, assigned a staff person to assist the Historic District Study Committee in all phases of its work including the preparation of research and paperwork necessary for a Multiple Resource Nomination. The staff person, Robert Donahue, a University of Michigan graduate with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in American Studies which was centered on the study of Historic Preservation, brought to the study committee the skills needed to turn the raw Monroe Historic Survey data into a draft Multiple Resource Nomination that could be refined by the State Historic Preservation Office (Michigan History Division) staff and submitted to the National Register.

The staff person, having served as the fieldwork coordinator for the Monroe Historic Survey (National Register Grant-1978), reviewed that survey data as his first task during the fall of 1979. His review, which included an overview of the survey mapping system, indicated that a highly concentrated area of pre-1930 architecture rested in the heart of the City's boundaries. After trimming the Survey Area along its eastern, western, and northern borders, a concentration of pre-1930 resources was identified that represented between eight-five and one hundred percent of the total existing architecture of each block.

Two study areas resulted, one north of the River Raisin and one on the south side. To the north the area was bounded by Lorain, Lavender, and Detroit streets and the River Raisin. Boundaries south of the river were drawn along Roessler Street, the southern city limits, Conant Street and the river. Approximately 3,000 resources existed within these boundaries. When broken down by use, almost eighty-five percent of the total were residences, eleven percent were commercial buildings, two percent were industrial structures, and two percent were municipal, religious, institutional, educational, open space, and "other" resources.

Research by the study committee and staff person on the growth and development of Monroe justified the selection of these Study Area boundaries. The staff person documented that the Multiple Resource Study Area roughly corresponded to the area of settlement in 1837, when the City was incorporated. Growth continued within these boundaries for the next eight decades with new development occurring within the established street plan rather than expanding the City limits. The Study Area reflects Monroe's growth until 1930, after which the Great Depression, urban sprawl fostered by improved transportation, and the post-World War II baby boom altered the course of Monroe's development.

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The resulting study area contains an unusually rich mixture of nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture which visually interprets the evolution of this small mid-western city. By utilizing additional historical, architectural, and cultural documentation the Historic District Study Committee and staff person refined the Study Area's boundaries after consultations with, and preliminary approval from, the State Historic Preservation Office and then proceeded with completion of the draft National Register Multiple Resource Nomination.

The Study Committee, through a broad application of the National Register criteria, delineated four historic districts and one individual site for potential inclusion in the draft National Register Nomination. These selections reflect the full range of building types and usages found in Monroe. Each historic district displayed at least a ninety percent concentration of resources meeting the selection criteria and district boundaries that make it clearly distinct from its surroundings. The districts include the East Elm-North Macomb Street Historic District, an area containing both large upper class houses and more modest dwellings; the St. Mary's Academy Complex Historic District; the Old Village Historic District, an area including the "Downtown" with its many fine nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings, churches, houses, public buildings and early industrial structures; and the St. Mary's Church Complex Historic District. The one new individual site nominated, the New York Central River Raisin Railroad Bridge reflects engineering significance. (See Map #1 "Historical Districts and Individual Sites Within the Monroe Multiple Resource Study Area.")

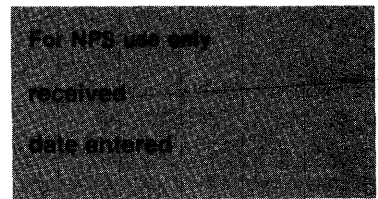
In addition the study area includes four previously listed individual sites. The Weis Manufacturing Company at Union and W. Seventh streets and the Rudolph Nims House at 206 W. Noble Avenue are outside the boundaries of any of the nominated historic districts, while the Governor McClelland House at 47 E. Elm Avenue falls within the proposed East Elm-North Macomb Street Historic District and the Sawyer House at 320 E. Front Street is within the proposed Old Village Historic District.



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PART III: METHODOLOGY FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND INDIVIDUAL SITES  
WITHIN THE MONROE MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA (See Map #1)

The Historic District Study Committee, assisted by the Department of Community Development staff and the SHPO's Regional Preservation Coordinator, made several assessments of the 3,000 resources documented within the Multiple Resource Study Area. While the study committee felt that most of Monroe's resources within the Study Area were of local architectural and historical interest, the group realized that not all were of National Register quality. Therefore, the committee felt a definite need for a selection criteria that would allow for the consistent identification of applicable resources and maintain the integrity of National Register eligible districts and sites.

Utilizing the "National Register Criteria for Evaluation" presented in 36 CFR 60.6, the study committee made some minor additions that it felt would reflect the special needs of the City and the character of its architectural heritage. The following criteria was thus developed:

The creation of a Historic District was not based on any single criterion. Districts were delineated only after several criterions from the various headings listed below were considered.

I. Architectural and Engineering Importance

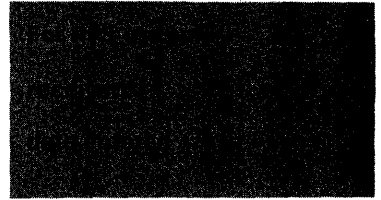
- A. Is an area or neighborhood characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or
- B. Is a resource a specific architectural type or engineering specimen; or
- C. Is it a structure which possesses a high degree of originality; with little or no alteration; or
- D. Is it a structure with unique architectural styling or engineering significance; or
- E. Is it the work of a well-known designer or architect; or
- F. Does it contain elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation or technological advancement; or
- G. Does it portray the environment in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.

II. Historical and Cultural Importance

- A. Is a site or structure associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Monroe's history; or
- B. Is a site or structure associated with the lives of persons significant in Monroe's past; or

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- C. Is associated with significant social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual and ethnic contributions to Monroe's heritage; or
- D. Is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places; or
- E. Is currently listed in the State Register of Historic Sites.

III. Geographic Importance

- A. Is a site which, because of its geographic location, was very important in the development of Monroe; or
- B. By being part of, or related to, a square, park or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on its historic, cultural, or architectural link; or
- C. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood or city.

IV. Archaeological Importance

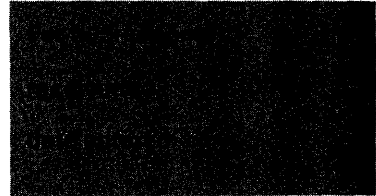
- A. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history; or
- B. Is a known archaeological site which potentially contains information unique to the City of Monroe, the State, and/or Nation; or
- C. Is a known archaeological site in a reasonably undisturbed state; or
- D. Is a known archaeological site which, if disturbed, would irrevocably destroy any possibility of gaining a fuller understanding of any aspect of our past.

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NOTE: All archaeological resources existing within Monroe's Study Area were not studied for purposes of the National Register Multiple Resource Nomination due to the lack of expertise available to identify sites. When information becomes available through the State Historic Preservation Office, other archaeological resources will be recognized and added to the nomination through the amendment process.

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PART IV: OVERVIEW OF THE MULTIPLE RESOURCE STUDY AREA (see Map #1)

Monroe is situated at the western end of Lake Erie about 30 miles south of Detroit and 20 miles north of Toledo. It sits astride the River Raisin about three miles west of the lake shore. The terrain is generally flat on both sides of the river, but slopes gently up toward the northern and southern city limits. A compact Victorian commercial area of two- and three-story brick buildings is centered on Front Street on the south side of the River Raisin between Macomb and Cass streets and extends up Washington and Macomb streets as far as First Street where the county courthouse and city hall are located. Radiating out from the commercial area are grid-plan Victorian era residential areas of detached, brick or frame houses on ample, landscaped lots along tree-shaded streets. The single lot development pattern assured that there would be a great range of styles and periods represented on most streets. The finest residential area on the southside developed along Washington Street between Second and Sixth streets, although splendid isolated examples of high style residences can be found throughout the neighborhoods. Other than churches and schools, the neighborhoods are exclusively residential with no commercial intrusions. The town's oldest buildings are to be found generally in the area closest to the river between Second and Front streets west of Wadsworth.

The north side of the river contains a significant concentration of nineteenth-century high style domestic architecture on Macomb, and Elm streets. Interspersed among some of Monroe's most opulent houses are less distinguished middle class dwellings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much of the rest of the north side was built up in the twentieth century with suburban, middle class houses built between 1915 and 1960. Historically, there was little commercial development on the north side, although some convenience stores have been built on North Monroe Street within the last twenty years. Much of the north side is occupied by the large campus of St. Mary's Academy which covers 240 acres north of Elm Street between Godfroy and Lavender streets.

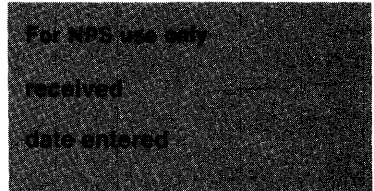
Architecturally, Monroe is one of Michigan's most distinguished communities of its size. The full range of styles from the 1820s to the 1930s represented in the town's building inventory provide a catalogue of Michigan small town building from first settlement to the Great Depression. Because the community has never suffered from a devastating fire or natural disaster and has grown so slowly that it has not been the subject of massive redevelopment, it has retained buildings from practically every decade since its founding in the late 18th century as one of the state's first communities. Its prolonged prosperity and fortunate location near major population centers resulted in a style consciousness that is reflected particularly in the town's many fine period residences.

Historically, Monroe has grown from a trading post established in the 1780s into a mature industrial community of 23,000 people. Throughout its history, water resources have had a great impact on the City's growth and development. As is the case with many rivers in the eastern United States, the River Raisin was a source of power for early industry, a source of food for early pioneers, and most importantly, a source of transportation for people and goods. Because much of the western shore of Lake Erie is extensive marshland subject to extreme water level fluctuations and consequently uninhabitable, the settlement of Monroe took place nearly three miles inland from the lake on high ground. The presence of the marsh barrier between the City and Lake Erie was probably the single greatest influence upon Monroe's development, and until recently, the City developed all the characteristics of a river, rather than a lake, community.

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Champlain's mapping expedition of the Great Lakes in 1612 was one of the first ventures by Europeans into the interior of the region. In spite of his reports of vast natural resources, it was not until nearly a century later that the first French Jesuit and Franciscan priests entered the lower peninsula of Michigan, then known as "New France." At first, French colonization under Louis XIV constituted little more than the establishment of out posts in the frontier, solely for the purpose of fur trading. Unlike British colonization efforts, the French maintained strict control over immigration into the territory allowing only priests and "licensed adventurers" into New France. As a result, French colonization occurred very slowly in Southern Michigan with Detroit and Frenchtown (Monroe) eventually becoming the principal settlements.

The notes of the Jesuit priests, Hennepin and Charlevoix, who visited the Monroe region in 1701 and 1721, respectively, reveal that the area was a "hunter's paradise," bountiful in "vast prairies, grand forests and charming streams" all teeming with deer, buffalo, bear and countless other well-documented flora and fauna. These early French explorers also spoke of two Indian tribes, the Ottawas and Pottawatomies, who had villages along the "Nummasepee" or River of Sturgeon. It wasn't long before the French, impressed with the wild grapes covering the shores, renamed it the "River aux Raisin."

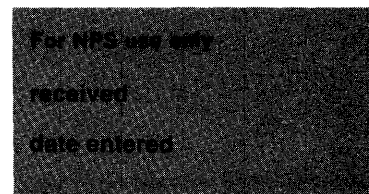
Although the French government was primarily interested in the fur trade, in 1732 New France's Governor, General Beauharnais, was instructed to begin issuing land grants to encourage settlement. It was not until 1780 that present day Monroe attracted its first permanent settler, Francis Navarre, who arrived from Detroit. Credited as the founder of Monroe, Navarre constructed a house on the south bank of the river, on lands he was eventually deeded. In 1784, a group of French Canadians joined him and the settlement of "Frenchtown" began. The architecture and layout of this early settlement was indicative of the primitive conditions in the area. The houses were all made of handhewn posts and beams joined in a distinct fashion that has little in common with the Lincoln-log type of construction associated with American pioneer log cabins. Sharpened picket fences, or "puncheons," were placed around the settlement as a defense against the Indians. Serving to connect the outlying houses and offering access to the interior were two narrow paths paralleling both sides of the river.

In 1785, the Delaware, Ottawa, Wyandotte, and Chippewa Indians agreed to a treaty which ceded to the settlers a strip of land lying between the River Raisin and Lake St. Clair. This was the only soil which could be utilized by the whites for farming under the terms of the agreement. The tract was divided into ribbon farms in the traditional French Canadian manner, with each household receiving a long narrow farm only a few hundred feet wide extending back several miles perpendicular to the river bank. Although it later resulted in an often unwieldy pattern of development, at the time this system served the necessary purposes of providing each settler with direct access to the river, while keeping the houses close together along the riverbanks to facilitate social life, defense and cooperative labor. The farms eventually extended for eight or nine miles along both sides of the River Raisin and directly influenced all subsequent land division in this part of Monroe County.

In 1793, an American settlement was established at the nine year old village of Frenchtown, and a blockhouse was constructed to provide protection from potential Indian at-

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tacks. Three years later, the small fortress in the wilderness flew the first American flag over Michigan soil. At the time, Frenchtown rivaled Detroit for the distinction of being the principal settlement in the lower peninsula.

Michigan became a territory in 1805 and pioneers began trickling into Monroe County. Most settled on the northern bank of the River Raisin. This increase in population brought about the organization of the Second Regiment, under the leadership of Colonel John Anderson, who had come to Frenchtown in 1800. He in partnership with Francis Navarre established a trading post on present day Elm Avenue, on the northern bank of the river, providing a commercial focal point for the scattered agrarian community.

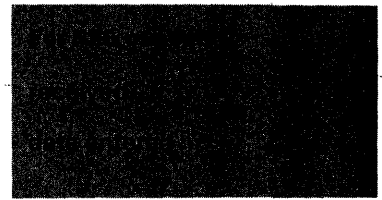
About this time, the English began encouraging the Indians to drive the Americans out of territory. Promises of rewards and protection of their hunting ground led to Indian participation in the War of 1812. Frenchtown's role in this war was most unfortunate. The Indian and English forces took over the village, causing many families to flee to Canada and Ohio. In the winter of 1813, American troops managed to regain Frenchtown, but were surprised by a reinforced company of English and Indians. Hoping to save property and lives, the Americans surrendered. Some were captured and imprisoned while others escaped. Unfortunately, many of the captives were killed by the Indians. The battles and massacre of the River Raisin are among the most significant military events of the entire War of 1812.

The years following the war witnessed the return of many families who had fled, as well as new settlers. Again, settlement was concentrated on the north bank of the river at the edge of the Great Marsh. This changed in 1817, however, when Joseph Loranger offered a portion of his land, south of the river and upstream from old Frenchtown as a location for a new village. At the same time, Territorial Governor Lewis Cass created Monroe County, named after President James Monroe. Loranger's offer of deeded public lands, streets and alleys was accepted, and the county seat was officially established in the newly-incorporated Village of Monroe. The village plat was laid out by Henry Disbrow who used the conventional gridiron approach to platting, with a public square located one block east of the main street. The first Court House was built in the square, subsequently named Loranger Square, on the site of the present Presbyterian Church.

Shortly after its establishment, the Village of Monroe experienced its first wave of "Western Fever." In 1818, Monroe served as a port for the first steamboat on the Great Lakes. By the time the Erie Canal opened in 1825, Monroe was a major gateway to the Michigan frontier. However, as mentioned earlier, Monroe was very much a river community at this stage of its history and was not prepared to become a major lake port. Because of the extensive marshlands that posed a formidable barrier between the Village and Lake Erie and the shallow, meandering character of the River Raisin, direct, large-scale commercial shipping access to Monroe was not possible. Instead, LaPlaisance Bay became the town's commercial post, even though this harbor was nearly three miles south-east of the Village, was barely navigable by larger ships, and was poorly sheltered from Lake Erie storms. Nonetheless, the LaPlaisance Bay Harbor Company was organized in 1826, and the port was linked with the Village by a turnpike and horse-drawn tramway. As a result of these efforts, Monroe was able to rival Detroit and Toledo as a commercial harbor for several years.

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The citizens of Monroe, anxious to encourage settlement in their community, made organized attempts to attract new residents from the East. Their first endeavor occurred in 1833 when the Village overwhelmingly approved the construction of the municipally financed steamboat, "Monroe." The ship operated for several years between Buffalo and LaPlaisance Bay, bringing westward-bound settlers and their supplies. The growth of Chicago to the west made Monroe an ideal "jumping-off" spot for travelers from the East. Monroe was able to capitalize upon the great tide of westward movement and, in the brief period from 1830 to 1835, the local population tripled. A second major effort occurred in 1838 when the citizens decided that a new harbor should be built. Because LaPlaisance Bay offered poor shelter from storms, and because of its distance from the City, it failed to adequately serve the increasing commercial shipping activity in the area. Once again, strong civic support was generated for the construction of the City Ship Canal, designed to connect the Village with the federally-financed U.S. Ship Canal. Access to Lake Erie was greatly improved as a result of the construction of nearly two miles of improved shipping channels and canals on the River Raisin.

The late 1830s were important for the village. In 1837, the Village was formally incorporated as a City and, in the same year, Michigan was granted statehood. Also in 1837, the newly-created State legislature appropriated funds for the construction of three cross state railroads: the "Northern" from St. Clair to Kent County; the "Central" from Detroit to the St. Joseph River; and the "Southern" from Monroe to New Buffalo. Shortly afterwards it became evident that funds would not be available for the construction of both the Central and the Southern, and it appeared as though plans for the Michigan Southern might be cancelled. However, local determination managed to push the railroad through to Hillsdale before State funds ran out. The Southern was eventually extended to Chicago, and Monroe remained a popular stop in the movement westward. In 1846, the Southern was sold by the State and a number of Monroe citizens became major stockholders.

The City vigorously pursued its attempt to become a major transportation center. In 1852, the Michigan Southern Railway competed with the Michigan Central Railway for a contract with the U.S. Post Office to carry mail between Buffalo and Chicago. A contest between the two lines was scheduled to determine which would win the contract. The race began at Buffalo, where each railroad's steamer was to sail across Lake Erie, carrying passengers and cargo. Michigan Southern's boat, the "Northern Indiana" arrived in Monroe ahead of schedule and was greeted by a cheering crowd. Here, the Chicago-bound train was loaded and took travelers through the City. Throngs of people gathered to meet the train. A banner proclaiming "The Floral City Welcomes You" saluted the company. Children, carrying basketfuls of flowers, distributed blossoms among the visitors and scattered the remaining buds along the railroad tracks. The trainload of officials and travelers went on to Chicago, winning both the contest and the mail contract. Since that event, Monroe has often been referred to as the "Floral City."

While the transportation facilities described above were a boon to local population growth, the establishment of local industry and commerce was equally important in influencing people to settle in Monroe. Commerce in the early settlement was mostly confined to trading and basic support activities. As the communities on both sides of the river grew, the need for a bridge linking the settlements became acute and in 1819 John Anderson and Oliver Johnson built the first toll bridge across the River Raisin at the present site of the Monroe Street Bridge. Soon afterwards, the village's first grist mill, the

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Waterloo Mill, was constructed. It was followed by other grist and saw mills and a distillery. These mills served a wide area, including nearby portions of Canada, whose farmers, for example, sent 150 bushels of wheat for grinding as early as 1825.

With the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, Monroe became a boom town as a gateway to the newly-opened Michigan frontier. The land rush that resulted led to the expansion of the town's commercial facilities. Logically, the first two businesses to flourish were banks and land offices. Another predictable result of the movement of people and goods was the development of warehouses and similar harbor businesses. As LaPlaisance Bay became the waterway terminus for much of western Lake Erie, warehouses were constructed there by Harleston and Haft in 1837, followed in 1839 by J. Q. Adams and W. C. and J. M. Sterling. The facilities at LaPlaisance Bay were rather short-lived, however, for after the completion of the City Ship Canal, maritime activity shifted to the City dock's on the River Raisin. The Sterlings were the first to move their warehouse in 1843 and were followed shortly by the other merchants from LaPlaisance Bay. With the completion of the Michigan Southern Railroad in 1841, Monroe, for the first time, became the center of a two-way movement of goods. Grain, both of local origins as well as from Jackson, Washtenaw and Lenawee counties was milled in Monroe before being shipped East on the returning steamboats that had brought goods and settlers to the frontier.

This same period of history saw Monroe establishing a name for itself with produce of a different kind. With the arrival of E. H. Reynolds in 1841, the area north of the river was shortly transformed into extensive nurseries. In 1846, I. E. Ilgenfritz arrived from Pennsylvania and formed in partnership with Mr. Reynolds. Eventually the business became one of the largest nurseries in the county continuing in business into the twentieth century.

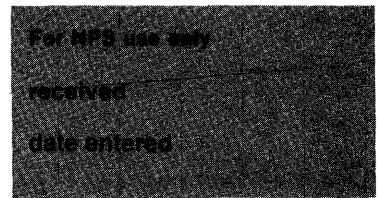
The architecture of the period between 1820 and 1840 exhibits the influence of the Federal Style in form and detail. Many residences display interesting elliptical fanlights on symmetrical facades with delicate Federal trim. The architectural heritage of the period from 1840 to 1860 is largely comprised of Greek Revival structures with occasionally examples of Gothic Revival and Italianate design.

The port and railroad facilities supported Monroe from the 1860s through the 1880s as it became a center for shipping lumber and wood products. With plentiful timber resources in the southern part of the State, Monroe's location again proved strategic. The Monroe Paper Company, the Monroe Paper Products Company and the Richardson Paper Company all got their start during this period producing commercial-grade wrapping paper from the by-products of lumbering. Charcoal was also a wood product in great demand, and was used in many manufacturing operations. This product was first exported in 1846 by the enterprising J. M. Sterling who eventually watched his business grow to a peak of over 10,000 tons in 1888. In addition, his warehouse operation handled wood, straw, hay, sault and ice. During the latter part of the 1880s, the Sterling Company became involved with the Western Union Telegraph Company, then rapidly expanding across the continent, supplying most of the telegraph poles used in the Central Time Zone.

This prolonged prosperity encouraged Monroe's citizens to develop an increased awareness of the town's visual character and aesthetic quality, which led to a demand for

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quality craftsmanship. The result was an era of fashionable ornamentation and fine architectural detail which contrasts with the modest architectural styles of the town's earlier years. Residential, institutional, public, and commercial buildings were constructed in a wide range of Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, East Lake, and Shingle styles.

In spite of its relative prosperity, by the close of the Civil War, Monroe had clearly lost its bid to rival Detroit and Toledo in size and commercial importance. Its poor harbor facilities, encircling belt of marshland, and declining importance as a rail center all contributed to its eclipse. With the consolidation of the transcontinental railway network the newer lines completely circumvented Monroe. As a result, Monroe's population stagnated in the years from 1880 to 1900.

Nevertheless, it was this period that witnessed the complete transformation of the downtown commercial sector. Slowly, the wooden structures built during the 1830-60 boom period began to vanish, giving way to more imposing, brick Italianate commercial blocks. The substantial quality of these structures reflects the healthy, if not booming, economy of a maturing community.

The quiet period of economic consolidation and capital accumulation that lasted from 1880 to 1900 paved the way for a modest industrial boom in the early twentieth century. The town's wood products industry expanded into its economic mainstay as the River Raisin Paper Company constructed a huge new plant in 1910 on the site of the 1813 Battle of the River Raisin and the Weis Manufacturing Company constructed a plant in 1906 to produce office furniture and paper products. The Amendt Milling Company built a large regional grain mill in 1913 reinforcing Monroe's long standing importance in that industry. In the 1920s the Consolidated Packaging Corporation, the Detroit Stoker Company and the Newton Steel Company diversified the industrial base. All of these industries expanded upon the wood products and raw material processing activities that had dominated the local industrial economy since the mid-nineteenth century.

In addition to these industrial resources, the City of Monroe has always had another resource present throughout its history: the marshlands. While never actively cultivated in a formal sense, the marshes did support a number of small commercial and recreational uses. Although not necessarily confined to the marsh area, the first commercial fisheries became prevalent in 1856 with the founding of the Chittenden Company. Using large nets to catch whitefish, herring, bass, pickeral and sturgeon, Monroe quickly became known for its export of fish and caviar. In the period between 1878 and 1890, over \$100,000 worth of caviar was exported. The marsh areas were also abundant in wild ducks, geese and muskrat, as well as in wild rice and lotus. The "harvesting" of these products however occurred primarily on a recreational, rather than commercial basis. One of the largest organizations to utilize the wetlands was the Monroe Marsh Club which, at their inception in 1887, owned nearly 2,300 acres for their shooting and fishing activities. At its height, the Marsh Club had a large clubhouse located south of the U.S. Ship Canal as well as numerous cabins scattered throughout their holdings. At about the turn of the century, an additional recreational facility, the Monroe Boat Club, attracted visitors to the Monroe Piers at the mouth of the River Raisin. Eventually, the Monroe Piers resort contained cottages, hotels, and a casino, all located along the piers and lakeshore, where the water-related activities of regattas, steamer cruises and "bathing" were the order of the day. The facilities at the Monroe Piers were made accessible by a



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local inter-urban line. The marshes continued to serve recreational uses until the onset of World War I, when the resort lost popularity and the structures were gradually demolished.

The continued development of Monroe's industrial and commercial business led to the construction of many fine buildings. Victorian styles began to lose their appeal as the Shingle, Bungalow and Colonial Revival styles became popular at the turn-of-the-century. In the first third of this century, a variety of commercial, as well as residential architectural styles were introduced into the community. Classical Revival, Prairie, Art Deco and historical revival styles are all evident in Monroe. New construction mostly took place within the original 1837 city boundaries and further enhanced the architectural variety of the streetscapes.

By the 1930s Monroe had acquired all the attributes of a self-sufficient, economically healthy community with a diversified industrial base. In the period from 1900 to 1930, the City's population had more than tripled. The City administration was committed to major public improvement projects including the construction of streets, bridges, and a municipal utility system and, most importantly, the transformation of the marsh area into industrial sites. Accompanying the local boom in municipal and industrial development was a tremendous expansion in housing and retail activity.

Since the Great Depression relatively little new construction has occurred within the city limits of Monroe. The town has grown modestly in spite of the gradual erosion of its economic base. In recent years the city government, encouraged by vigorous public support, has launched a campaign to enhance Monroe's turn-of-the-century appearance and capitalize on its excellent environmental qualities and rich architectural heritage as a means of encouraging growth and economic stability.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**      See text      **Builder/Architect**      See text

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

See attached essay

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

"A Historical and Archaeological Investigation of the River Raisin Battle Site of 1813."

Monroe: Monroe County Historical Commission, 1977.

Bulkley, John McClelland. History of Monroe County, Michigan: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress, its People, and its Principal Interests. 2 Vols. Chicago:

(continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Monroe

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References Multiple-see U.S.G.S. Map

A 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Old Village Historic District

Beginning at the intersection of the north ROW line of W. Front Street and east ROW line

(continued)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie J. Vollmert, Historic Preservation Coordinator

organization MI. History Division, Dept. of State

date January, 1982

street & number 208 N. Capitol Avenue

telephone (517) 373-0510

city or town Lansing

state Michigan 48918

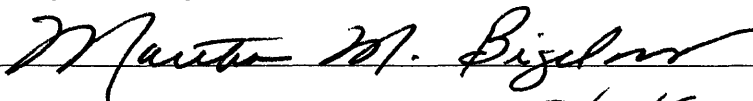
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Director, Michigan History Division

date 3/3/82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

date

OMI NO. 1001-00-3  
EX. 12/31/84  
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date entered

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of Fishburn Alley; then north along said ROW line extended to the south bank of the River Raisin; then east along said bank to the line formed by the extension of the line of the west half of Lot 12 of the McClelland Plat; then south along side line to the south ROW line of East Front Street; then east along said ROW line to its intersection with the west ROW line of Navarre Street; then south along said ROW line to its intersection with the north ROW line of the alley between fifth and sixth streets, then west along said ROW line to the west ROW line of Wadsworth Street; then south along said ROW line to its intersection with the north ROW line of East Sixth Street; then west along said ROW line to its intersection with the west ROW line of LaPlaisance; then south along said ROW line to its intersection with the south lot line of W. Seventh Street; then west along said lot line extended to its intersection with the west ROW line of Washington Street; then north along said ROW line extended to its intersection with the north ROW line of West Seventh Street; then west along said north ROW line to its intersection with the west lot line of the properties on the west side of South Monroe Street; then north along said west lot line extended to its intersection with the north ROW line of West Third Street; then west along said north ROW line extended to its intersection with the north ROW line of West Front Street; then west along said north ROW line to the point of beginning.

East Elm-North Macomb Street Historic District

Commencing at a point 140 feet east of the intersection of the E. ROW of North Macomb Street and the S. ROW of East Lorain Street; thence generally southerly and easterly along the rear lot lines of all property fronting the east side of North Macomb Street from the S. ROW of East Lorain Street to the N. ROW of East Hoble Avenue; thence westerly along the N. ROW of East Noble Avenue to the west line of the Lockwood and Little's Plat extended; thence southerly along the west line of the Lockwood and Little's Plat to the southwest corner of said Plat; thence generally easterly along the rear lot lines of all property presently fronting the north side of East Elm Avenue from the southwest corner of the Lockwood and Little's Plat to the E. ROW of Riverview Avenue; thence southerly along the E. ROW of Michigan Avenue extended to the north bank of the River Raisin; thence generally westerly along the north bank of the River Raisin to the southeast corner of the present Monroe Municipal Parking Lot; thence northerly along the east property line of the Municipal Parking Lot extended to the N. ROW of East Elm Avenue; thence westerly along the N. ROW of East Elm Avenue approximately 150 feet to the southeast corner of the present Downriver Federal Savings and Loan Association property (also described as City of Monroe Tax Parcel No. 6M 1307); thence generally northerly along the rear lot lines of all property presently fronting the east side of North Monroe Street from the N. ROW of East Elm Avenue to the south line of the Noble Plat; thence westerly along the south line of the Noble Plat to the southwest corner of Lot 27 of the Noble Plat; thence northerly along the west property line of Lot 26 of the Noble Plat to the southeast corner of Lot 24 of the Noble Plat; thence westerly along the south property line of Lot 24 of the Noble Plat to the E. ROW of North Monroe Street; thence northerly along the E. ROW of North Monroe Street to a point 11.3 feet north of the N. ROW of East Noble Avenue; thence generally easterly along the rear lot lines of all property fronting the north side of East Noble Avenue from the E. ROW of North Monroe Street to a point 226 feet west of the W. ROW of North Macomb Street; thence North 24° 30' E 153 feet; thence generally northerly along the rear lot lines of property presently fronting the West side of North Macomb Street from the N. ROW of East Noble Avenue to the S. ROW of East Lorain Street; thence easterly along the S. ROW of East Lorain Street to the Point of Beginning.

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name City of Monroe Multiple Resource Area  
State Michigan

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- |     |   |                                     |        |   |
|-----|---|-------------------------------------|--------|---|
| 1.  | Old Village Historic District                     | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | <u>5/6/82</u> <u>Delora Byers</u>                               |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 2.  | East Elm-North Macomb Street<br>Historic District | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | <u>5/6/82</u> <u>Delora Byers</u>                               |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 3.  | St. Mary's Church Complex<br>Historic District    | Entered in the<br>National Register | Keeper | <u>5/6/82</u> <u>Delora Byers</u>                               |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 4.  | St. Mary's Academy Historic<br>District           | <u>DOE/OWNER OBJECTION</u>          | Keeper | <u>Owner has objected 5/6/82</u><br><u>determined eligible</u>  |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 5.  | New York Central River<br>Raisin Railroad Bridge  |                                     | Keeper | <u>Owner has objected 6/23/82</u><br><u>determined eligible</u> |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 6.  |   |                                     | Keeper | _____   |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 7.  |   |                                     | Keeper | _____   |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 8.  |   |                                     | Keeper | _____   |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 9.  |   |                                     | Keeper | _____   |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |
| 10. |   |                                     | Keeper | _____   |
|     |   |                                     | Attest | _____   |