

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY-NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum

AND/OR COMMON

The Edison Institute

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Oakwood Boulevard

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Dearborn

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

16

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Michigan

CODE

21

COUNTY

Wayne

CODE

163

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

The Edison Institute

STREET & NUMBER

Oakwood Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

Dearborn

STATE

Michigan 48121

__ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wayne County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

101 City-County Building

CITY, TOWN

Detroit

STATE

Michigan

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Michigan Historical Commission Registered State Site No. 251

DATE

9/13/63

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Michigan Historical Commission Historic Site Survey

CITY, TOWN

505 N. Washington

Lansing

STATE

Michigan

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 Edison Institute is located on 255 acres in Dearborn, Michigan. The Institute is divided into two main units, the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. The Henry Ford Museum consists of a Fine Arts Section, a Street of Early American Shops, and a Mechanical Arts Hall subdivided into seven major sections: agriculture, crafts, industrial machinery, steam and electric power, communications, lighting, and transportation. The museum is housed in a large brick building measuring 450' x 800'. The front units of this building are designed to be replicas of Independence Hall, Congress Hall, and the Old City Hall of Philadelphia. Greenfield Village is an open-air village museum. It is composed of nearly 100 buildings, structures, and objects. Included are homes, shops, stores, mills, and laboratories. Most of the buildings are typical of 19th century America and were chosen because they illustrate the development of one of three fields - agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation.

The Edison Institute possesses an exceptionally high degree of integrity both in the artifacts and objects that constitute the Henry Ford Museum collection and in the buildings, structures, and objects that make up the Greenfield Village open-air village museum collection. (National Historic Landmarks Program Criterion 4-a)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Edison Institute, better known as the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, is one of America's outstanding museums and museum villages. The Institute's significance is fourfold. First, it illustrates Henry Ford's conception that the history of American material progress is a story of the development and growth of agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation. As a reflection of Ford's ideas, the Institute contributes to the understanding of an important figure in American industrial history. Second, the Henry Ford Museum contains one of the most important collections of Americana in the United States. As such it is an important educational resource. Third, Greenfield Village is a precedent setting open-air outdoor village museum that served as a model in the development of other such villages across the United States. Lastly, Greenfield Village influenced the historic preservation movement, first, by developing a type of historic preservation centered on preserving and interpreting historic buildings by moving them to a re-created village setting and, second, by stimulating a reaction to the museum village that led to the extension of the historic preservation concept to include the preservation of the man built environment in situ as documents of time, place, and historical continuity.

The Edison Institute is a resource that illustrates and characterizes an educational institution that had a decisive impact on the development of the open-air outdoor village museum and that played an important role in the history of museums and in the history of historic preservation. (National Historic Landmarks Program Criterion 1-2)

History

When we are through, we shall have reproduced American life as lived, and that, I think, is the best way of preserving at least part of our history and tradition. For by looking at things that people used and that show the way they lived, a better and truer impression can be gained than could be had in a month of reading - even if there were books whose authors had the facilities to discover the minute details of older life.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(see continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 255

UTM REFERENCES see National Register of Historic Places - State Nomination

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(see continuation sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James H. Sheire

5/26/81

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Department of the Interior, N.R.

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

440 G Street NW., Pension Bulding

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington,

D.C. 20243

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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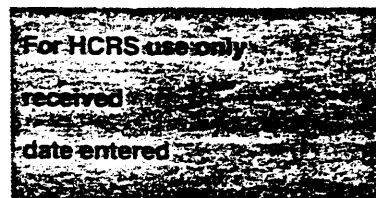
So answered Henry Ford around 1928 when asked why he wanted to build a museum. By 1928 Ford had already been involved in historic preservation for some ten years. He had been collecting Americana for at least thirteen years. By 1928 he had formulated firm ideas about history and about how it should be presented and interpreted. Now the time had come to put his ideas into practice. However, the inspiration behind Henry Ford's decision to create the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village is hard to trace. Even Ford himself is said to have been unsure of the origins.¹ According to William Greenleaf, the author of a book on Ford's philanthropic activities, the decision to build the museum and village was "...inspired mainly by the nostalgia for a vanishing rural America of his boyhood that overtook Ford in middle age."²

This nostalgia had lead Ford around 1914 to restore his father's farm, Ford's boyhood home. He had also begun collecting Americana and by 1919 had acquired a sizeable collection including numerous editions of the McGuffey reader. His interest in the past was further stimulated in 1919, when in the course of a libel trial the press quoted him out of context as saying that "history is bunk" (a quote that became associated in the popular mind with Ford as long as he lived). Stung by the charge that he did not care about the past, Ford decided to prove his critics wrong. On the way home from the trial he told his secretary:

We're going to start something. I'm going to start up a museum and give people a true picture of the development of the country. That's the only history that is worth observing, that you can preserve in itself. We're going to build a museum that's going to show industrial history, and it won't be bunk! We'll show the people what actually existed in years gone by and we'll show the actual development of American industry from the early days, from the earliest days that we can recollect up to the present day.³

Back in Dearborn, Ford gave orders to start collecting Americana on a huge scale. In the following years he collected technological and decorative masterpieces. He collected items and objects associated with famous Americans. And he collected humbler or everyday bric-a-brac. By 1923 pieces of Americana such as player pianos, traction steam engines, inkwells, grease pumps, hunting rifles, and thousands of other objects filled an industrial building where at one time the Ford Motor Company assembled trucks. Ford became the primary collector of Americana in the world, all with thought of someday building a museum to house the huge collection (simultaneously Ford single handly created an interest in Americana).

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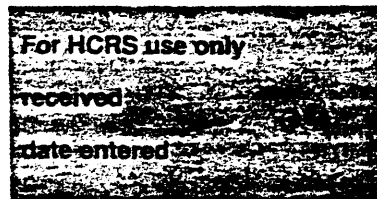
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In 1923 Ford expanded his interest in the past to include historic preservation. It happened when Eastern antiquarians approached him soliciting funds to save the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts, an inn that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had made famous in his "Tales of a Wayside Inn." Taken with the project, Ford responded in Ford fashion. He purchased the inn and 2,600 acres. He bought the additional land to assure the preservation of the inn's setting. Ford then restored the inn and, in addition, moved historic buildings to the property to enhance the inn's ambience. By 1926 Ford had spent \$2,000,000 on the project. However, as much as Ford enjoyed the Wayside Inn, traveling there often, by 1927 his thoughts had turned to home, to his huge Americana collection, and to the museum he wanted to build.

By at least 1927 Ford had settled on a plan for his museum. There would be two separate units. A formal museum would tell the story of man's technological and cultural progress through comprehensive displays of inventions and artifacts. A village of early American life would show how similar objects were made and used and at the same time display examples of commercial, residential, and industrial architecture. In 1928 the design of the museum was settled, when Ford accepted architect Robert O. Derrick's proposal that the building be a reproduction of Philadelphia's Independence Hall. In the same year it was brought to Ford's attention that his friend Thomas Edison's famous Menlo Park "invention factory" was being destroyed. Ford greatly admired Edison as an embodiment of American practical genius. In addition he felt a personal debt to Edison for encouraging him to work on the automobile. Ford decided that the best way to remember Edison's accomplishments was to reconstruct as accurately as possible the Menlo Park laboratory within Greenfield Village.

Work on the museum and village proceeded rapidly throughout 1928 and 1929. Ford had decided that the complex would be dedicated in October 1929, when he would sponsor a celebration in honor of the 50th anniversary of Edison's discovery of the first practical incandescent electric light bulb. When October 21, 1929, arrived, the front of the museum was finished and some 30 buildings had been reconstructed in the treeless village. Called Light's Golden Jubilee, the event brought together a cross section of the American elite including President and Mrs. Herbert Hoover, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Will Rogers, and, from France, Madame Curie. The celebration's highlight arrived, when Edison went to his lab and re-enacted the lighting. Across the country thousands had turned off their lights in anticipation. When NBC, that carried the ceremonies over its 150 radio outlets, broadcast that the lamp glowed, the lights went back on.

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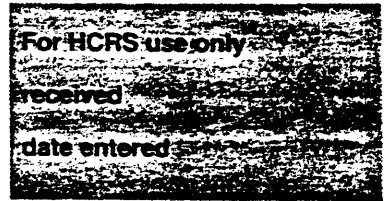
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The Edison Institute did not open to the public until 1933. By that time the museum was almost complete and the exhibits had been set up. In the village more buildings had been added, among them the homes of famous Americans, the Wright brothers' Dayton bicycle shop (where the Kitty Hawk was built), and, of course, buildings associated with Ford's childhood, with his education, and with the development of his cars. Also by 1933 another element of Ford's conception of the Edison Institute's purpose was operational, namely, an elementary and secondary school. Ford did not create the village and museum to be static museum displays. He intended that they should teach Americans about their past. The museums would be a place where the young would learn about how their forefathers lived and worked. They would see how and what they created. The children would learn by doing. After studying in school, they could visit the museum and village both to see what they had learned about and also to perform craft work and conduct experiments. In Charles B. Hosmer's opinion, "Ford went further than other patrons of historical restoration in his effort to educate his fellow citizens."⁴

At Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum, Ford desired to teach young and old his view that American history is a story of technological progress in agriculture, industry, and transportation. He saw a clear continuity between the pre-industrial past and the present. "The buildings and objects he brought together," Hosmer's writes, "were the visible reminders of the links in the chain that lifted mankind out of drudgery."⁵

Under Ford's ever watchful eye, and with his constant guidance, the museum, village, and school continued through the 1930s and into the 1940s on the path their creator charted. Some complained that the complex was not professionally administered. Other critics claimed that the collections did not reflect the best curatorial techniques. Historic preservationists lamented the removal of buildings from their original settings. Ford, who had built his dream with the help of Ford Motor Company employees and who had always mistrusted so-called professional expertise, took no note of such criticism. (The anti-intellectual's anti-intellectual, Ford on one occasion said, "I don't like to read books. They muss up my mind." And on another, "I wouldn't give 5¢ for all the art in the world.") The museum and village were his creation. They had become the concrete realization of one very rich man's nostalgic "recherche du temps perdu;" his attempt to bring to life through a synthetic museum arrangement a vision of a bygone era of village green, yeoman farmer, merchant, craftsman, and inventor complete with their buildings, furnishings, implements, tools, means of transportation machines, and inventions. For Henry Ford, who spent \$30,000,000 1920 and 1930 dollars realizing his fantasy, that was all that mattered...and, as he said, "it won't be bunk."

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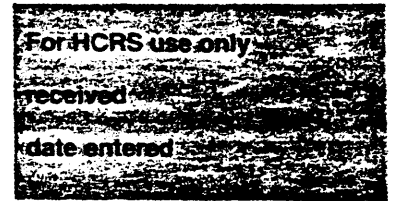
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The significance of the Edison Institute is fourfold. First, the complex is significant in its association with Henry Ford. Ford is a figure of world history. His development of moving mass production, a milestone in the history of the Industrial Revolution that opened the way to economies of scale, and his role in making the automobile the dominant means of transportation, were of immense social and economic importance in the shaping of the 20th century. As much as any other single man Ford contributed to the transformation of American society and industry. And it was the same Henry Ford, a man who mistrusted history as taught in books, who desired to preserve the material world that he had done so much to replace. The Edison Institute thus throws light on Ford's ideas and helps us better understand a complex man of international stature and influence.

Secondly, the Henry Ford Museum is significant in the history of the museum movement. The museum contains a preeminent collection of Americana. Its transportation section is second to none and its automobile collection is the finest in the United States, if not in the world. Although the museum did not pioneer in museum techniques, such as the display or the cataloging and care of objects, it today ranks in the forefront of American museums. As such it is an important educational resource.

Thirdly, Greenfield Village has been very influential in the history of the open-air outdoor village museum movement. The outdoor museum in the United States traces its history to the Scandinavian open-air museum of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As early as 1919 William Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities called for an outdoor museum on the Scandinavian model (series of functional units in a park like setting, e.g. a farmhouse with its attendant structures next to a hamlet or village of related structures moved from some other region). When in 1923 Ford decided to preserve the Wayside Inn in Sudbury and move buildings from the region to the land around the inn, he was influenced by Appleton. Indeed, Ford hired William W. Taylor away from Appleton to do his collecting and to provide ideas about the best outdoor museum setting. When it came time to build Greenfield Village, the original conception was to re-create a typical New England village based on the experience gained in restoring the Wayside Inn and in re-constructing other buildings gathered from throughout the New England countryside. Ford's palatial exhibit hall, also may reflect the influence of the Scandinavian open-air museum, although it is unknown, whether Ford himself ever intentionally used the Scandinavian experience as a model. In adding Edison's Menlo Park facility and in collecting buildings associated with other famous Americans such as Burbank, Webster, Wright, and Steinmetz, Ford went beyond the Scandinavian model. These houses, as well as Ford's delight in accurately recreating period interiors, show the influence of the American historic period room and historic house museum movements. These impulses combined with Ford's own idea of history resulted in Greenfield Village, the first outdoor open-air village museum in the United States.

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Greenfield Village became, if not the model, than most surely a major influence on the museum villages that followed. For example, in 1938 the Wells brothers, the creators and patrons of Old Sturbridge Village, sent one C. Malcolm Watkins to Greenfield Village to study what Ford had accomplished. Greenfield Village's "consistent element of simplicity" impressed Watkins, and there is little doubt that George Wells incorporated many Greenfield Village features, when he put together Old Sturbridge. Other well known outdoor museums such as Old Deerfield, the Shaker Museum, Cooperstown (original buildings in situ), and Pioneer Village (Minden, Nebraska) followed Ford's initial example. Today there are around 100 serious museum villages in the United States as well as countless other so-called "historic" complexes. Greenfield Village is in many respects the father of them all. Lastly, the Fort Museum's "Street of Shops" has been imitated by dozens of historical societies and numerous historical museums across the country.

A fourth area of Greenfield Village's significance is the Village's influence on the history of historic preservation. Museum villages such as Greenfield Village and Williamsburg have not been without their critics. Prior to the 1960s Williamsburg was the most important single influence in the history of historic preservation. Period historic preservation was nurtured there and a generation of historic preservation professional archeologists, historians, historic architects, and architectural historians trained there. However beginning in the 1960s a reaction developed against museum villages in general and Williamsburg and Greenfield Village in particular. Some critics charged that they presented an artificial, dream like view of an unreal past that was periodized and sanitized to fit the conceptions of their wealthy patrons. Others, such as Ada Louise Huxtable, spoke of "galloping restorationitis" and called it a national disease. These critics championed an environmental historic preservation that would integrate a preserved man built environment into the daily lives of all communities and lend them a sense of time, place, and historical continuity. Historic preservation should move out of the restored, recreated, and re-constructed museum villages, historic sites, and historic house museums, they claimed. Instead, historic preservation should concentrate on re-cycling fast disappearing historic neighborhoods, commercial structures, and factories; in short, historic preservation's true mission was the preservation of an almost gone Main Street, USA. "By attacking the failure of museum villages to teach these lessons (the loss of vernacular historic fabric in situ)," Richard M. Candee has written, "They placed themselves in the vanguard of those who brought these ideas into the mainstream of modern preservation thinking."⁶ Greenfield Village and the other outdoor museums thus influenced historic preservation, first, by pioneering the preservation of historic structures by moving them to village like settings, and, second, by providing a model and ideology of history against which the new historic preservation rebelled and in reaction to which an environmental historic preservation defined itself.

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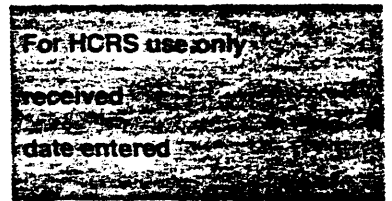
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In 1979 the Edison Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary. There was no national ceremony similar to Ford's 1929 celebration of Light's Golden Jubilee. Nevertheless, the Edison Institute's patrons and professionals could look back with satisfaction. In large part they had remained true to Ford's original intention. The Edison Institute continues to present and interpret a certain kind of the American past against a back drop of artifacts and illustrations meant to educate the people in the stages of American material and technological progress. Henry Ford was in fact ahead of his times, when he recognized that a country's physical, material heritage is an important historic document worthy of preservation and interpretation. Over the years hundreds of thousands of Americans have visited the Edison Institute to share Ford's vision. Today they continue to come.

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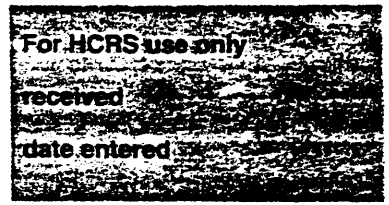
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Footnotes

1. Geoffrey C. Upward, A Home for Our Heritage, the Building and Growth of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, 1929-1979, (Dearborn, 1979), p. 1
2. William Greenleaf, "Henry Ford," Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Five, 1945-1950, (New York, 1974), p. 302.
3. Upward, p. 3
4. Charles B. Hosmer, Preservation Comes of Age, (Charlottesville, 1981), 1, p. 80.
5. Hosmer, p. 95.
6. Richard M. Candee, "Saving the Unsaveable: Second Thoughts on Museum Villages as Preservation," unpublished ms of a speech delivered at a National Trust for Historic Preservation Convention, 1977.

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Bibliography

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Greenleaf, William. From These Beginnings, the Early Philanthropies of Henry and Edsel Ford, 1911-1936. (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1964).

----- "Ford, Henry." Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Five, 1945-1950. (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1974).

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----- Preservation Comes of Age, From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949. (Charlottesville; University of Virginia Press, 1981). 2 Vol.

Katz, Herbert and Marjorie. Museum, U.S.A.. (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965).

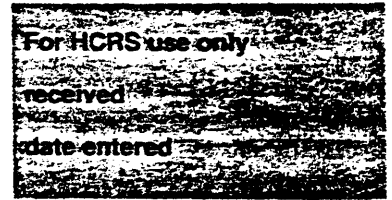
Nevins, Allan and Frank Ernest Hill. Ford: Expansion and Challenge: 1915-1933. (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1957).

Schwartz, Alvin. Museum, The Story of American's Treasure Houses. (New York: E. D. Dutton and Co., 1967).

Simonds, William A.. Henry Ford and Greenfield Village. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1938).

Upward, Geoffrey C.. A Home For Our Heritage, The Building and Growth of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, 1929-1979. (Dearborn: The Henry Ford Museum Press, 1979).

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Boundary

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the junction of the right-a-ways of Michigan Avenue and Southfield Expressway, proceed in a southerly direction along the western edge of the Southfield Expressway right-a-way to a point at the northeast corner of the junction of the right-a-ways of Southfield Expressway and Village Road, then proceed in a westerly direction along the north edge of the Village Road right-a-way to a point at the northeast corner of the junction of the right-a-ways of Village Road and Oakland Boulevard, then proceed in a northerly direction along the eastern edge of the Oakland Boulevard right-a-way to a point at the southeastern corner of the junction of the Oakland Boulevard and Michigan Avenue right-a-ways, then proceed in an easterly direction along the southern edge of the Michigan Avenue right-a-way to the junction of the Michigan Avenue and Southfield Expressway right-a-ways, the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encloses the property owned by the Edison Institute and includes all buildings, structures, and objects associated with the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.