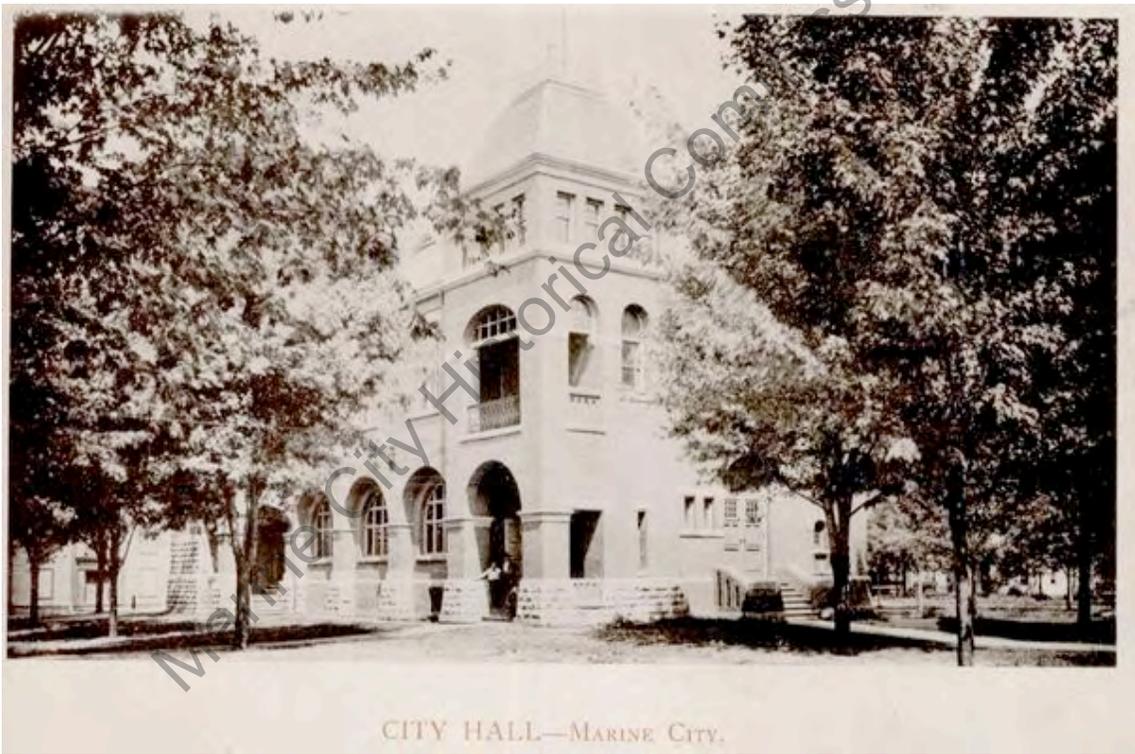


**PRELIMINARY HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY  
COMMITTEE REPORT**

**The City Hall of Marine City Michigan**



CITY HALL—MARINE CITY.

HISTORIC DISTRICT NAME:

The City Hall of Marine City in Heritage Square

Marine City, Michigan

St. Clair County

**Preliminary Report**

Historic resources: 5 Non-historic: 3 Percentage: 98% historic

District Significance

Criterion C: Design/Construction - reason: Richardsonian Romanesque style city hall designed by an important Michigan architect, George Dewitt - Mason, in the early days of his career.

Legal Boundary Description: The city block (Heritage Square) where City Hall stands was never platted. It is surrounded by block 36 on the east, block 29 on the south, block 35 on the west and block 42 on the north.

Charge of the Committee: To conduct the duties and activities of a study committee including, inventory, research and preparation of a preliminary report for the proposed historic district.

Committee Members: Heather Bokram, Suzanne Jenken, Irene Kotas, Scott Tisdale, Kim Turner, Judith White.

Contact name of a City Official:

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Marine City Historical Commission

**PRELIMINARY HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**APRIL 2008**  
**HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
**MARINE CITY, MICHIGAN**

**CHARGE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE**

The Historic District Study Committee was appointed by the Marine City Commission, pursuant to Resolution No. 084-07 on November 15, 2007. The study committee is a standing committee charged with conducting the duties and activities of a study committee on a continuing basis. These duties include inventory, research, and preparation of a preliminary report for the proposed historic district. Study committee members serve two year terms. A list of current committee members follows:

**STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Heather Bokram – President and Founder of the Marine City Historical Society, established in 1993. Owner of the historic, Queen Anne Heather House Bed and Breakfast in Marine City. Heather is also a board member of the St. Clair County Community Foundation.

Suzanne Jenken – A current member of the Marine City Historic Commission and former member of the Marine City Historical Society. Suzanne is also a student of architecture at Macomb County Community College.

Irene Kotas – A current member of the Marine City Historic Commission. Irene is a home maker and office volunteer at the Marine City Chamber of Commerce. She is a member of the Maritime Christmas Steering Committee.

Scott Tisdale – A current member of the Marine City Historical Society and owner of an historic Marine City home. Scott is devoted to the study of the history of Michigan and of the Marine City region in particular.

Kim Turner – A current member of the Marine City Historical Society and owner of an historic Marine City home. Kim is an artist and has produced drawings, paintings in use on websites generated in Marine City. She has also donated her talent to restore and improve civic signage in the city.

Judith White – Retired professor of Humanities and Art History with a focus on historic architecture. Judith is a member of the Historical Society and the president of the Marine City Chamber of Commerce. She has a special interest in local historic architecture. She is the creator of the Marine City Historic Walking Tour and the author and publisher of a descriptive Walking Tour Guide.

## INVENTORY

A photographic inventory of the proposed district was conducted in 2008 and has been submitted as part of the inventory report.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SINGLE SOURCE DISTRICT

The City Hall is situated in the center of a city block on Broadway on the North end of Marine City, two blocks west of the St. Clair River shoreline. The property, which is a designated park, is on the north east corner of Broadway and Main (also known as state road M29). The proposed district is a single source district with one contributing building, five contributing fixtures and three non-contributing fixtures.

## CITY HALL DESCRIPTION – CONTRIBUTING

**Description begins next page**

# THE CITY HALL OF MARINE CITY

A Description of Its Design



A turn of the century photograph of the City Hall of Marine City, designed by architects George Dewitt Mason and Zachariah Rice in 1883. anon.

Text and photos by Judith White

The design for the Marine City City Hall, finished in 1884, proposed a large, rectangular brick structure of two and a half stories topped by a steeply pitched, ridged, hip roof. Putting aside decorative elements for a moment, one sees a utilitarian concept that provided large spaces for a basement, ground floor public rooms, the fire department and a second floor entertainments room. This large, plain structure gains personality and style from elements that are largely *applied* to the core concept. These aesthetic embellishments are mostly found on the south and east facades. They range from conscientious duplications of historical forms to casual, one time quotations. Major thematic material forms patterns but there are also moments of surprise inclusions.

Architects George DeWitt Mason and Zachariah Rice were at the beginning of their careers and heavily influenced by the Shingle and Romanesque Revival styles of Henry Hobson Richardson who gained international attention in 1877 with the completion of Trinity Church, Boston. Inspired by the medieval style of c. 900 to c. 1150, Richardson created an imposing, influential master work on Copely Square. Richardsonian Romanesque style swept the country. Key ingredients are: the use of columns, engaged columns or pilasters topped with round/Roman arches, the use of rusticated stone, small, narrow windows, large and small towers, a sense of weight or mass, and contrasting surface textures and colors. City Hall reflects these characteristics. (Fig. 1)

The strongest aesthetic influence on City Hall is Richardson Romanesque but elements of Renaissance style and classical forms also appear. Looking at the south façade roof there are three very graceful eyebrow dormers per side (now boarded up) that grace the surface and work nicely against the bell roof of the south east tower. Two towers dominate the south façade but are neither symmetrical in placement or similar in design. The central section of the second floor reflects Richardson's practice of grouping windows. Such window groupings reoccur in the building. The ground floor, between towers, begins with heavy rustication and rises to a pattern of pilasters and arches of considerable projection. Windows beneath the arches were half circles combining large rectangular panes with numerous, small, square lights. The south west tower westward to the corner of the building housed the fire department. A large arch spanned the garage doors of the fire wagon bay and above this arch the second floor has a solitary window. The south west tower looks octagonal and free standing at first glance. The south east tower does not stand apart from the building. It projects slightly from the south and east walls and modifies that corner of the building into a porch, entryway and balcony. The east façade is divided into thirds with the tower to the left, entrance in the center and a pseudo tower to the right. Rusticated limestone, round arches, brick projections and stone moldings reoccur in the overall design. The north façade is almost featureless. The original west façade was obliterated with an addition for the police department once housed here.

## THE SOUTH FACADE

The first floor wall area between the towers is reminiscent of a colonnade. (Fig. 2) Arches begin as rusticated limestone courses, rising in a battered (slanted) formation for seven courses to form tall plinths or pedestals. A molding of smooth, darker stone caps each pedestal and is continued as a horizontal band across the brickwork of the entire façade. The same stone is used above this molding to create a classically simple column base design of plinth and ogee molding. Brickwork rises from this point to suggest massive pilasters with a very deep inset back to the recessed windows. A thinner slab of dark stone at the top of the pilaster suggests a classically inspired capital and the brick arch immediately begins its spring.

These arches are half circles, or Roman arches, of standing brick and, with the pilasters, create a pattern more reminiscent of a Renaissance loggia than a Romanesque cloister. Two stone or terra cotta escutcheons of symmetrical vegetable motifs are installed directly over the spandrels of the central arch and serve to reinforce a Renaissance quality. The original windows within these arches were also arched and, looking at preserved originals and old photos, were probably filled with small, square panes of glass set in thin muntins and mullions for the curved upper half and larger panes for the lower portion of each window. Today wood paneling fills the upper arch and a combination of two double hung and one picture window fills the bottom half. Centered above these arches, the second story windows are in Richardsonian pairs combining two large rectangles of glass with nine small lights in a three over three pattern atop each rectangle. (Fig. 3) Such groupings will reoccur. Heavy, rusticated slabs of stone form the sills and lintels of these windows. Running the width of the façade, just above the lintels is a brick torus molding. A few inches further up is a flat, white fascia and gutter. Switching attention to the base of the wall, just up from sidewalk level, there are small, rectangular windows, framed in limestone, and centered in each arch, that illuminate the basement. The loggia concept and the prominent, three arch pattern are unfortunately interrupted by the contemporary addition of a projecting, shed like, housing for a doorway into the basement. (Fig. 4)

As noted, the fire department was housed in the south west corner of the building. The double doors of the fire wagon garage were set in a brick arch similar, but not identical, to the arches elsewhere in the façade. Modern steel and glass replace the wooden doors. No stone pedestals or pilasters were employed. A large, half round transom made of 58 lights with thin muntins and mullions survives. To the right and immediately adjacent this former garage door is the south west tower. (Fig. 5)

## SOUTH WEST TOWER

The tower served as a hose drying rack and is therefore hollow. But, it is designed to suggest at least seven “stories” or levels within. Because it only holds the wooden drying rack and pegs, it is possible to see a good deal of the interior structural brick work. Of note is the use of squinches where flat walls transition to the octagon shape. Outside,

each level of the tower incorporates different medieval inspirations including a portion that is quite random in nature.

The south west tower begins at sidewalk level with 12 courses of rusticated limestone blocks set as a battered (slanted) wall forming a great, square pedestal. Quarter round stone molding is used as an accent half way up the pedestal and again at its top. Brickwork begins and this “first level” of the tower, maintains the square form, and has three narrow, rectangular windows. Massive, rusticated limestone sills and tall lintels, cut in a three lobe arch shape, frame these windows. This Romanesque, almost Norman, motif is never used again. The “second level” of brick work creates a transition from a square to what appears to be an octagon shape by interrupting the two front corners with an attached buttress to the left and a blind niche supported by two brick corbels to the right. This odd asymmetry is not repeated nor are these shapes used again elsewhere. No windows are employed on this level. (Fig. 6)

Five panels of an octagon shape are joined to the south wall by flat wall extensions. Thus the back side of the tower, or what would be the sixth, seventh and eighth sides of the octagon, don't exist till the tower rises to the “fifth level”.

The “third level” of the tower employs narrow rectangular windows with plain sheets of glass. Narrow strips of dark, limestone, decorative molding encircle the tower above and below these windows. The “fourth level” windows rest on painted wood panels decorated with a raised, four column, three arch, relief; a miniature reprise of the south façade. The windows are the same height and width as the windows below but are gridded with small, square panes of glass and thin muntins and arranged to fit brick arches at the top. (Fig. 7) The brickwork between the windows and the arches over them also echo the south wall pilasters and arch pattern. The capitals in this instance are created of stacked wooden moldings in scotia, ogee and torus configurations. The “fifth level” up is plain brick, that ends with a stone molding. It is at this level that the tower becomes a true octagon shape.

The “sixth level” employs arched, louvered vents instead of windows on seven sides. The front (south) octagon face is decorated with a gable shape placed above a large, round recess. This recess is now filled with brick work that is painted white but may once have held a clock. The roof of the tower is a simple octagonal cone. (Fig. 8)

Immediately to the east of this tower, and connected to it, is a massive, square, open air porch. (Fig. 4) The south and east sides of this porch are large arches that share one supporting brick pillar. The pillar base is multiple courses of rusticated limestone and stone molding of the same design and proportions as the “loggia” of the south wall. Four steps lead to a landing and a door into the east side of the tower. Three more steps to the right lead up to an entrance door in the south wall.

The roof of the porch is flat and can serve as a balcony accessible from the second floor entertainments room. Today the balcony edge is fitted with an iron balustrade. Originally brick and limestone were used. The access door is half the width of the windows on this level and a transom repeats the nine light pattern found in these windows.

## THE SOUTH EAST TOWER

The south east tower serves today as the main entry point to the building. It is a three story design with massive open arches on the first and second levels and an enclosure or “gallery” with eight windows on the third level. This level rises through the corner of the main roofline. An argument could probably be made that it isn’t a tower at all but rather surfaces made to look tower-like. No matter, it constitutes an important visual counter weight in opposition to the hose tower and west end of the building. (Fig. 9)

The tower projects beyond the façade about 18 inches on the south side of the building and about six inches on the east side. At sidewalk level battered, rusticated limestone bases support sturdy brick piers decorated with darker stone moldings where capitals might be. A half circle arch begins its spring from this point. Under this arch four steps lead up to a shallow porch. The entrance is set in the back wall of the porch within a smaller arch that creates a variation on the arched entry way. Unfortunately these two arches are not aligned and the possibility of a theme and variation comparison is lost. A massive rusticated lintel runs the full width of this wall. Topping this lintel is a semi-circular transom comprised of 30 square lights.

The second level of this tower is an open balcony that is framed by a flattened brick arch on the south face. Limestone molding decorates the exposed front edge of the balcony floor and an iron railing and balusters spans the arch opening. Rusticated molding is placed where capitals would be used and the arch spring begins at that point. Stone corbels are set into this limestone and they support a sturdy, horizontal wood beam and large muntins in an arched frame now painted white. (Fig. 9 – a) The effect is an expanded version of the little lights of the original window theme and old photos reveal this framework was originally glazed.

Today a horizontal white band of material spans the south and east faces of the tower at the level of the eaves of the building. Above this band are four symmetrical windows of a large rectangular pane below and six little lights above. The window openings are topped with camber arches. A brick torus molding runs at the summit of the wall. The roof of this tower is a graceful bell roof that unfortunately has been truncated to create a platform for city emergency sirens. In very old photographs the bell roof is topped with a flat summit carrying a white balustrade and a somewhat elaborate lightning rod.

## THE EAST FACADE

As mentioned, this wall design breaks the surface into thirds: tower, entry and pseudo tower. (Fig. 10) The first floor of the east tower begins as an rusticated podium. The same smooth, darker stone molding tops the six courses of limestone. A rectangular opening for the side of the porch is topped with a massive rusticated lintel. Above the lintel the brick is configured into a flattened relieving arch. A door to the basement was added in later years. It interrupts the pedestal design and caused the elimination of a tall, very narrow window to the right. A rusticated lintel tops the door opening. A few feet above this lintel and slightly to the right, a slab of rusticated stone that was the narrow window lintel now sits in isolation amidst the brick work. Moving attention further up the tower, the side opening of the second story balcony has rusticated stone spanning the base of the opening. A rusticated stone banister on supporting brick work fills the bottom quarter of the archway. A pattern of columns and narrow arches is created in relief on this brick work. White corbels are installed on the inner face of the arch about three fourths of the way up the opening. Two white pieces of wood survive as a horizontal beam and a wooden arch on the underside of the brick arch. The intent was to mimic the south façade window treatment but the muntins, mullions and glass no longer exist. Rough limestone that ran across the south face of the tower continues half way across the east face and then stops. The flat white band of material found on the south face continues the full width of the tower becoming a fascia in the central section of the east wall. Above the white band are a series of four windows identical to the south side. The brick work concludes with a brick torus molding just beneath the gutters.

The central third of the east wall offers one original basement window and five feet above that a heavy, rusticated sill stone and two small, rectangular windows topped by a large, rusticated lintel spanning both windows. The original porch is demolished and replaced with a small brick porch served by six cement steps on the east and a very long handicap ramp on the north. Hidden from view under a canvas portico, a round arch transom uses muntin and light patterns in a grid and two, halved, hub and spoke patterns. The second story windows are a trio of arched rectangles with two panes below and twelve gridded lights above. The arches are standing brick and the sills are rusticated stone. The brick torus molding continues across this section of wall. (Fig. 11)

The northern third of the east wall is partially obscured by the wood ramp but centered in that section of wall, at first floor level, is one, small arched window of twelve square lights. The sill is rusticated stone but the arch over top is not brick work. Instead it is a massive rusticated stone arch constructed of one extra large keystone, two voussoirs and two springers. It is a classic Romanesque emblem but one not found elsewhere on the building. (Fig. 12)

Moving up the wall, a grouping of six windows used to light the northern half of a grand staircase within (one half now demolished). These windows are stacked two abreast and three high separated by rusticated sills and lintels. The bottom pair are plain glass

rectangles and the middle pair each have thirty two square lights. The top pair are less than half the height of the others, have twelve lights, and an arched top. The brick work creates two arches framing the windows. The spandrel area is covered with a triangular slab of rusticated stone. A circle of brick work framing a roundel window seems to rest on the stone insert and the tops of both arches. The glass and muntins of the roundel form a wheel of eight segments around a central circle of glass. This reflects the half wheel pattern used in the east entrance transom. At this point, this section of the wall has risen several feet higher than the eaves and will rise further yet to create a false front gable shape. The gable is accentuated by framing the peak with a projection of a double layer of brick. The outline of a corbelled arch is suggested by arranging these added layers of brick in an ascending, “saw tooth” edge. The emphasis on the vertical, the extra height and gable set this part of the wall apart and suggest a tower at this corner of the building as well. Lacking the original porch and staircase, we are left with some unfortunate interruptions and oddities.

## NORTH FAÇADE

Moving to the north façade, the sense that this was the “back of the building” and quite work-a-day, is very clear. Rusticated stone is employed sparingly as one horizontal band for the first floor and for door framing and some window sills. Placement of doors and windows of the first floor is dictated by internal function and no patterns are established. The second floor entertainments room is served by four large windows identical to the north façade. The only other surface decoration is the continuation of the torus molding a few inches down from the eaves. The spirit of studied historicism versus flippant quotations is gone. (Fig 13)

## MODERN DISTRACTIONS

Two contemporary interruptions of the original design have already been mentioned: the basement entrance added to the south wall and the porch and stairs of the east façade entrance. The third major addition covers the entire west end of the building. It is a one story, hip roof with ridge addition that housed the police department and patrol car work bays and parking for two police cruisers. Certain attempts were made to correspond to the older building. The new brick bares some resemblance to the original brick although it is not a close match. The windows of the south side are double hung with nine lights in the top half and have some correspondence to the original window treatment. (Fig. 14)

## THE INTERIOR

The Foyer

The southern half of a double grand staircase leading to the second floor entertainments room survives. (Fig. 15 ) The bottom half of the north staircase was demolished to create more office space. (Figs. 16 and 17 )

### The Main Floor

The main floor and the basement have been reworked and remodeled several times since 1884. Both levels have become a rabbit warren of added rooms, cut up spaces, storage, false ceilings, plumbing, heating and wiring fixtures, toilets and even jail cells. (Figs. 18, 19, and 20) No sense of the original design remains.

### The Entertainments Room

Taking the surviving stairs to the second floor, a visitor is presented with a dramatically improved level of preservation. This room was often referred to as “the opera house” in the past. A raised, apron stage with limited back stage space and wings, fills the west end of this floor. (Fig. 21 ) Audience chairs were portable and the room could be cleared for dances. The east end of the room has a balcony configured like a projecting gallery over the entrance doors. (Fig. 22 ) The lofty ceiling is supported by beam and bracket combinations. (Fig. 23 ) Woodwork on this floor appears to be original. The room is well lit and airy. Some of the glass on this level is original with significant ripple and bubble characteristics.

The interior of the south west (hose drying) tower can be accessed by a door in the south wall of the entertainments room. The peg system for draping fire hoses is reached from this level. (Fig. 24) One may also access the balcony over the south west porch and the upper “gallery” of the south east tower. (Figs. 25 and 26)



Fig. 1 South facade of the City Hall of Marine City



Fig. 2 Detail of south facade "loggia" style



Fig. 3 Detail of second story windows



Fig 4. Detail of south west porch, window treatment and contemporary basement access door.



Fig. 5 South west tower and former fire hall doors.



Fig. 6 Lower "levels" of the south west tower.



Fig. 7 Detail of tower window treatment.



Fig. 8 Details of the summit of the south west tower.



Fig. 9 The south east tower.



Fig. 9a A corbel



Fig. 10 East wall, first floor.



Fig. 11 East wall, second floor



Fig. 12 East facade, keystone arch window.



Fig. 13 The North facade.



Fig. 14 Contemporary addition, west facade



Fig. 15 Surviving, southern half of the staircase.



Fig. 16 Location of the demolished northern half of the staircase.



Fig. 17 What remains of the north staircase looking down on a false ceiling.



Fig. 18 Main floor office looking west.



Fig. 19 Main floor office looking north with doors to individual offices.



Fig. 20 Middle office. looking north, north side.



Fig. 21 Second floor entertainments room looking west toward the stage.



Fig. 22 Second floor entertainments room looking east.



Fig. 19 Main floor office looking north with doors to individual offices.



Fig. 24 Fire hose drying rack inside the south west tower.



Fig. 25 Balcony over the south west porch.



Fig 26 Balcony over the entryway in the south east tower.

## **NON-CONTRIBUTING FIXTURES**

Gazebo/band stand

Iron Bench

Flag Pole

## **CONTRIBUTING FIXTURES**

Ship Rudder – Protector, 1919 (Last wooden vessel built in Marine City)

Boulder with WWI dedication from 1920

Capstan – a vertical shipping winch, over 100 years old

School Bell – Removed from the Marine City Intermediate School which was built in 1898 and the bell is known to pre-date the school

## **BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The block on which the City Hall building is located was never platted. It is surrounded by block 36 on the east, block 29 on the south, block 35 on the west and block 42 on the north. In 1884 when a resolution was presented to use this piece of land for city hall, it was referred to as “the Park” (Village Hall Meeting Minutes of February 21, 1884).

## **SINGLE SOURCE DISTRICT BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The Marine City City Hall was constructed on a plot of land that is one city block in size bounded by Broadway, North Main, Pearl and North Elizabeth Streets. The City Hall is a distinct, late nineteenth century, municipal building located on the thoroughfare corner that is the state road M-29 (known as Broadway Street and N. Main at that intersection). It is surrounded on the north and west sides (N. Elizabeth and Pearl) by residential structures from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (See: Boundary Justification Illustrations: “looking north” figs. a, b, and c.; “looking west” figs. a, b, c, and d on the next page)

On the south side (M 29/Broadway) there are commercial buildings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see “looking south” figs. a and b). On the west side (N. Main) is the Methodist Church which was built in 1905 plus one residence. (See “looking east” figs. a, b, and c) This property is further set apart by its park setting and the maritime artifacts displayed there.

As stated by Michael A. Kirk, preservation architect and author of Marine City Hall Building Preservation Master Plan dated April 4, 2000

Photographs looking off site from the Marine City City Hall.



Looking East fig.a



Looking East fig b.



Looking East fig. c



Looking North fig. a



Looking North fig. b



Looking North fig. c



Looking South fig. a



Looking South fig. b



Looking South fig. c



Looking West fig. a



Looking West fig. b



Looking West fig. c

“Marine City’s City Hall in my opinion is representative of a much grander governmental entity other than a city. I think it was built to accommodate the functions of a city hall and fire department but the type of architecture, the Richardsonian Romanesque architecture style, the way it was constructed, would be at the level of a county administration building or county court house. So I think that in that stance you find your city hall amongst probably 30 – 40 county court houses in the state that are in use and have been restored. In terms of other city halls, I don’t know that there are other city halls of the character that you have here, just because they weren’t built as grandly as yours were”. (Michael Kirk, speaking at The Marine City Ministerial Association Forum on City Hall, 12 March 2006)

## MARINE CITY HISTORY

Marine City is approximately three square miles and is located in southeast St. Clair County. It is situated on the shores of the St. Clair River, and is bisected by the Belle River and is among the older settlements in Michigan. French settlers arrived in the 1780’s and obtained a deed for property from the Chippewa Indians. Their ribbon or strip farms were just south of the Belle River. A slow migration of French families moving up from Detroit enlarged the population.

When Marine City was first settled it was known as Yankee Point or as the first French settlers named it, La Belle Riviere. When Captain Samuel Ward, a native of Vermont, first arrived in 1818, he saw great trade potential in the area and founded the village, calling it Ward’s Landing. The village grew and prospered under Samuel Ward’s successful efforts to grow the ship building industry. The township was organized in 1821 under the name Village of Newport.

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 had a dramatic impact on the city. Ward’s first ship used the canal to establish trade with New York. Migration from Europe and New England burgeoned with an easier travel route.

Shipbuilding became the principal industry. Approximately 250 wood boats were built and launched on the banks of the Belle River. The boats built included sidewheel steamboats, barks, schooners, steam barges, tow barges, and tugs. In addition, Marine City was an important port, as many boats were supplied with fuel (cord wood) and provisions. Upon completion, the ships were launched into the Belle River and taken to Detroit for installation of their boilers and engines. (*A Short History of Marine City Michigan*, Frank McElroy, pgs. 10, 11, 13).

From the 1890 Annual Review Edition of the *Marine City Magnet* the following was written: “Sailors constitute of large percentage of our citizens and it is probable that no city on the chain of lakes turns out as large a percentage of sailors as may be found from Marine City. Of the three hundred and fifty men in this area and earning their living on the lakes, over two thirds are officers and many of them own an interest in the boats they sail, fifty-two boats laying up in winter quarters here.” A list of 154 sailors with their ranking and ship name follows. (*Marine*

*City Michigan, an Historical Sketch*, prepared in 1976 by a bicentennial study committee, Dorothy Smith and Jean Leyhan.

Sidney C. McLouth, of Bay City, Michigan, bought the Lester Roberts Shipyard in 1910, operating it under the name of McLouth Shipyard, until his death in 1923. During World War 1, the McLouth yard had received a government contract for the construction of 150 wood, sea-going tugs; and three of these tugs were ready for delivery when the war ended in 1918.

Other significant industries at that time were barrel making, sugar production, logging, and, by 1882, the developing salt mining industry. George Dewitt Mason drew the architectural plans for the salt refinery, called “the salt block” in 1883 and noted in his diary it was almost finished that August. (Mason, 1883 Diary, Burton Collection, Detroit Public Library)

The village grew steadily in progress, bringing vacationers from the Detroit area to the salt spas and lovely hotels, first by the dirt roads in horse drawn carriages and, later on, the Inter-Urban Railroad which ran all the way from Detroit to Port Huron. Back then the trolley passed the South side of the City Hall along Broadway Street.

The village continued to prosper and in 1865 Marine City was incorporated as the Village of Marine. David Lester, who figured as a prominent ship builder at that time, became the village’s first President.

In 1884 the controversial decision was made to build a new structure to house the town government. The architect of the “salt block” had designed one other structure in town for one M.G. Stewart and had become well acquainted with Frank McElroy of the Town Council. In December an agreement was reached and Mason committed to produce the drawings for a town hall “at once”.

In 1887 the town was incorporated again as the City of Marine City and the Village hall became known as the City Hall, as it is today.

In 1896 freighters began to be constructed with steel hulls, and, due to the lack of railroads in the area and the shallowness of the Belle River launching sites, the ship building industry in Marine City went into decline. Salt had been discovered in this area in 1874, when the village was still known as Newport. Crockett McElroy, founder of the salt company, and father of Frank McElroy, was convinced that the salt bed extended far to the north and south of Marine City. The salt mining continued until 1888 when Detroit and St. Clair took over the industry using the expertise of Newport’s discoveries. It was due to lack of financing that the Village of Marine did not remain the prime area for salt. (McElroy. p 22) In later years the main employer in town was the Detroit Gasket Company. The town was no longer very affluent and when the gasket company closed the town had little discretionary income.

HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

By 1882 the town council decided they needed a bigger, more substantial building to house the seat of local government. On February 21, 1884, a resolution was passed by city council to use a piece of land known as the Park, for the location of the new Village Hall. Mr. Wood and Mr. Minnie were appointed to work with the president, David Lester, on locating the hall by measurement on the property. Frank McElroy, and Council President Dr. Baird, held talks with Mason during his trips to and through Marine City to commissions in Port Huron. In August Mason contracted with Amhurstburg, Ontario to design their city hall for \$250.00 and in December for the Village of Marine. (Mason. 1883 diary)

The building contract was ultimately awarded to Morley and Bower of Marine City after they were persuaded to match the lower bidder. The cost was to be \$11,750.00 and the building to be completed by November 1, 1884. (*Village Hall minutes, February 21, 1884*)

The building construction was on schedule and final payments were made to Morley and Bower by February 19, 1885. The total cost had increased to \$12,310.34. Mason and Rice complimented the builders on their excellent work on such a beautiful and functional Village Hall. (*Village Minutes, February 19, 1885*) This was despite earlier council arguments involving the Council President Baird who had offered to resign amidst allegations of sub-standard work by the builders.

Architect, George Mason was to become a significant and important architect in the state of Michigan, and ultimately was known as the "Dean of Detroit Architects". The Village of Marine hired his firm when he was 26 years old. It was representative of the growing success of the firm in the early 1880's. He partner, Zachariah Rice, stayed with the firm for 20 years. A very notable employee was the apprentice Albert Kahn who worked for Mason for a number of years. Mason died at age 92 in 1948. His career spanned over 50 years and there are numerous examples of his architecture throughout Michigan and western Ontario. Some of his buildings include the Grand Mackinac Hotel on Mackinac Island and, in Detroit, the Masonic Temple and the Gem Theater. In addition to now famous buildings, the firm produced a steady stream of designs for residences, train depots, civic structures, commercial buildings in Michigan and Ontario.

The Fire Department was housed in the south west corner of city hall. The canvas hoses were hung to dry in the south west tower. A firemen's rope ran from the upper level of the tower to the lower level where the fire truck was kept. From 1924 until c.1948, fireman, Walker Furtaw, and his family lived on two upper levels behind the stage of the auditorium. He was also the custodian of the building. The grandchildren of William have fond memories of playing on the stage. His son, William Furtaw, says the police department was installed in the City Hall in the early 1940's, and had offices on the south west end of the building with three jail cells located in the basement. The cells are still there today although an exterior entrance to the jail has been closed off and the only access now is from the inside. William Furtaw himself was born in the

living quarters of the City Hall in 1936 and was delivered by Dr. DeGurse, a very prominent citizen in the town.

Originally the auditorium, known as the Opera House, was the center of entertainment in Marine City. The annual Ship Captain's Ball, a grand event, was held there late in the year when the ship traffic had halted for the winter. Plays and concerts were performed regularly; The annual Firemen's Ball took place there. Local resident, 90 year old Iva Guyor remembers these dances well, when she would put on her best ball-gown for this and other exciting evenings.

The Opera House was reached by ascending the double grand staircase just inside the east entrance to the building. The auditorium itself is large with tall windows lining the north and south walls. At the east end is an apron stage with a projecting side apron, stage left, for musicians. Theatrical storage space is located beneath the stage. Above the entrance doors into the Opera House is a gallery which allowed extra seating. The Opera House ceased to function in the mid-sixty's. This was due to the need for repair of the leaky roof. Roof repairs were made but handicap accessibility mandates of the 1970's were too expensive for the town and the Opera House remained closed,

In 1974 the Detroit firm, Grunwell-Cashero Co, carried out some repair work. The exterior of the building was sandblasted and deteriorated bricks replaced. The cost at that time was \$19,997.00. (*The Times Herald* newspaper, 9/18/1974) The original Bandstand in the Park had been erected in the early 1900's and was used for bands performing outdoors for the public. By 1974 this bandstand was badly deteriorated. The members of Pride and Heritage Museum raised the funds and built a newer, smaller version of the original bandstand that year in the same spot. It is used today for concerts, Santa parade activities and weddings. The Park where City Hall stands today was dedicated as Heritage Square Park at that time.

City Hall was listed on the State of Michigan Historic register on August 6, 1976. That year a Bicentennial project sponsored by the Community Pride and Heritage Museum took place. The original time capsule was removed from the cornerstone of City Hall. Several articles were contained in what was thought to be a small wood cheese box, which had partially disintegrated. A copy of the Marine City Reporter Newspaper of May 22, 1884 was inside. It included a proclamation by Dr. R.B. Baird, village president, of a holiday for the dedication of the village hall on that date. There were also some coins of that period and earlier, the oldest being 1809, and a village ordinance book. One of the sections that escaped decay sets penalties for causing a disturbance in church during a service.. There was also a small copper box containing samples of the salt that was mined and a small pamphlet reproducing analysis of the salt.

The Community Pride and Heritage group replaced the old box with a soldered copper box made by local contractor, Fred Micoff. (The copper for the box came from the fittings of the rudder of the tug ship 'Protector' which Community Pride and Heritage installed in Heritage Square. 'Protector' was the last wooden vessel built in Marine City in 1919.) The contents of the box will be for some future generation to discover as no listings were made. One thing that is known

to be included is a report, prepared by Millie Bott, Pride and Heritage member, listing their projects completed to date: The dedication of Heritage Square, the planting of 12 Maple trees and the Bicentennial Oak there, the erection of the Protector rudder, the restoration of the original bandstand, and the mounting of the bell from the old Marine City Intermediate School, which originally came from the Union School.

As stated before, the Opera House was no longer used. In 1977 the Pride and Heritage Museum considered making the Opera House a museum. Two years passed and in 1979, Millie Bott attempted to find state funds to restore the Opera House. At that time it was estimated to be \$45,000.00. The effort was unsuccessful.

City Hall was entered on the National Register of Historic Places on January 11, 1982. In 1983, a modern addition was constructed. The police department was expanded with the addition of a large garage on the west side of the building housing police vehicles. The department remained in the City Hall until 2005.

In 1990 the city's Department of Public Works applied an inappropriate sealant to the exterior brick. After several years this caused severe spalling of the brick, especially on the south side of the building. In 1999, the Historical Society of Marine City made many attempts to encourage the City Government to remove the sealant, but to no avail. However, with the Society's perseverance, The Smith Group of Ann Arbor completed an architectural and engineering study in 2000. This study concluded that with proper repair and maintenance the City Hall would last well into the future. (Marine City Hall Building Preservation Master Plan, April 4, 2000, The Smith Group) From then on until 2005 the society prevailed upon the city fathers to do something to preserve and maintain the building. The building had been the seat of local government from 1885 until 2005 when the City Government abandoned the building due to deterioration from lack of maintenance.

In late 2005 the Historical Society initiated and partially funded an update of the Smith Group Study Report from 2000. Michael Kirk, Architect, who was the team leader on the original report, visited City Hall once again with engineer Robert Darvas. They made a formal report to the City Commission on January 26, 2006, concluding that although there had been further deterioration due to lack of maintenance, the building was still structurally sound.

In response to pressure from concerned citizens and the Historical Society, in the spring of 2007, the city administration appointed a citizens committee to put forth a solution. As a result the administration voted to adopt the 'CHAMP' plan, acronym for City Hall A Mixed use Plan. The CHAMP plan utilizes the combined efforts and resources of local citizens, the Historical Society, and local government. There are now positive steps being taken to restore the building to its former glory and to a mixed use once more.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISTRICT**

The Heritage Square Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion A, for its association with events that have named a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and under C, for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type of architecture and planning. The areas of significance are politics/government, maritime history, and architecture.

The district's period of significance is from 1884 to 1919.

## THE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

- A. Events - association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

*The City Hall has historic significance as the home of local government for a St. Clair River town that prospered from ship-building, barrel making and rock salt refining in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In anticipation of future prosperity, Marine City officials scheduled an election permitting voters the opportunity to choose and to pay for a new city hall. By two thirds majority the construction was approved. Amongst the approximate 1,000 listings in the Michigan state register there are only a few city halls. (Robin C. Simmons, marker coordinator of the Michigan History Division, Marine City Independent Press, May 23, 1979).*

- C. Design/Construction – embodies the distinctive characteristic of a type, period or method of construction or that represents the work of a master or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

*Marine City City Hall was modeled in the Richardsonian Romanesque style that was popular in the Victorian era. It has architectural importance as the early work of Detroit architect George D. Mason who, in partnership first with Zachariah Rice and later Albert Kahn, designed many of Detroit's and Michigan's most significant buildings over a most prolific fifty year period of architectural practice. Mason's versatility and eclecticism provided facile adaptations of changing architectural styles. Buildings designed by Mason's firm and listed on the National Register reflect this evolution. They include the Victorian Gothic Thompson Home for Old Ladies, Detroit (1884), the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island (1887), the Romanesque First Presbyterian Church (1889, 1935), the Detroit Police Station in the Belle Isle Historic District (1893), several Classical Revival buildings on the University of Michigan campus, Ann Arbor, with Albert Kahn (1901-1910), the Jacobethan Revival Lemuel Bowen House in the East Ferry*

*Historic District, Detroit (1912), and the monumental Neo-Gothic Masonic Temple Building, Detroit (1922-1926).*

Marine City's City Hall received State Historic Register designation on August 6, 1976 and National Register designation on January 11, 1982

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"Marine City opens hall cornerstone", *The Independent Press* (Marine City) 7 July 1976

*The Times Herald Newspaper*, Port Huron, September 4, 1974

Village of Marine. *Council Meeting Minutes*: February 19, 1884; February 21, 1885

Marine City Historical Commission

**STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY**

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway  
**City:** Marine City      **County:** St. Clair      **Zip:** 48039  
**Current Name:** Marine City City Hall  
**Historic Name:**

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall  
**Contributing:** Contributing Site  
**SHPO Evaluation:** Registered Historic Site

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:** City Hall/ Fire Station  
**Current Use:** Unoccupied  
**Owner Type:** Public

**Photo**

**Filename:**  
**Roll:**                      **Frame:**  
**View:**  
**Credit:** Judith White  
**Caption:**

**Maine Building**

**Foundation:**                      **Roof:**  
1.                                      1. Asphalt  
2.                                      2.  
3.                                      3.  
**Wall:**                                      **Other:**  
1. Brick                                      1.  
2.                                      2.  
3.                                      3.

**Period of Significance:**  
1894

**Area of Significance:**  
1. Architecture  
2. Events  
3.

**Arch/Builder:** George D. Mason  
**Date Built** 1884

**Architectural Classification**

**Material Notes**

**Description:** The City Hall is modeled in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. It is a two-story brick structure with rusticated limestone at its base and lintels above several of the exterior window and door openings. Its south façade has the most interest, with two three-story brick towers, several brick arches springing between massive masonry piers, and two exterior balconies from the second floor. The north tower is square and houses part of the main lobby and grand staircase. On its pitched, mansard roof sits the disaster siren for the city. The south tower is square at its base, changes to a full octagon shape. The east façade was designed to be the main public entry for the building, with an arched masonry opening which serves as the entry into the main lobby & staircase. This façade includes one side of the north tower and a gabled wall feature at the roof which has decorative windows to the second floor lobby. The rear or north façade is basically a flat rectangular shape with masonry openings for doors and windows. The north elevation includes the entry to the original jail cells. The only brick chimney in the building is best visible from this side. The west elevation has been drastically altered from its original appearance to allow for the 1940 addition. The original window openings were bricked up above the new addition roofline of 1983, but some original window members remain between the addition and the original building. This end of the building has gone through several renovations to accommodate the police department. The roof over the original building has a simple hipped shape which was originally slate but has been replaced with asphalt shingles.

**Other Buildings/Features:** Gazebo, Ship (Protector) Rudder, Boulder with WWI dedication, Ship Capstan, School Bell

**Statement of Significance:** *The City Hall has historic significance as the home of local government for a St. Clair River town that prospered from ship-building, barrel making and rock salt refining in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In anticipation of future prosperity, Marine City officials scheduled an election permitting voters the opportunity to choose and to pay for a new city hall. By two thirds majority the construction was approved. Amongst the approximate 1,000 listings in the Michigan state register there are only a few city halls.*

**Significant Persons:** . *It has architectural importance as the early work of Detroit architect George D. Mason who, in partnership first with Zachariah Rice and later Albert Kahn, designed many of Detroit's and Michigan's most significant buildings over a most prolific fifty year period of architectural practice. Mason's versatility and eclecticism provided facile adaptations of changing architectural styles.*

**References:** *(Robin C. Simmons, marker coordinator of the Michigan History Division, Marine City Independent Press, May 23, 1979).*

Kirk, Michael, AIA. Principal-in-Charge, Smith Group. "Marine City Hall Building Preservation Master Plan" 4 April 2000

**Surveyor's Comments:**

Marine City Historical Commission

STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway

**City:** Marine City      **County:** St. Clair      **Zip:** 48039

**Current Name:**

**Historic Name:**

**Photo:** following page

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall

**NR Eligible:** not NR eligible

**Contributing:** contributing

**SHPO Evaluation:**

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:** monument with school bell

**Filename:** school bell

**Current Use:** same

**Owner Type:** Public

**Photo**

**Roll:**                      **Frame:**

**View:** cd

**Credit:** Judith White

**Caption:** school bell

**Main Building**

**Foundation:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Roof:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Wall:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Other:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Period of Significance:**

1884

**Area of Significance:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Arch/Builder:**

**Date Built**

**Architectural Classification**

**Material Notes**

**Description:** The school bell from the 1895 Marine City High School. Monument constructed by Fred Micoff in 1976.

**Other Buildings/Features:**

**Significant Persons:**

**Statement of Significance:**

**References:**

**Surveyor's Comments:**

**STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY**

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway  
**City:** Marine City      **County:** St. Clair      **Zip:** 48039  
**Current Name:**  
**Historic Name:**

**Photo**

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall  
**NR Eligible:** Not NR Eligible  
**Contributing:** Contributing  
**SHPO Evaluation:**

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:** Rudder From wooden vessel Protector, 1919  
**Current Use:** Erected on City Hall properly  
**Owner Type:** Public

**Photo**

**Filename:**  
**Roll:**      **Frame:**  
**View:**  
**Credit:** Judith White  
**Caption:**

**Maine Building**

<b>Foundation:</b>	<b>Roof:</b>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
<b>Wall:</b>	<b>Other:</b>
1.	1. Wood
2.	2.
3.	3.

**Period of Significance:**  
1894

**Area of Significance:**  
1.  
2.  
3.  
**Arch/Builder:**  
**Date Built**

**Architectural Classification**

**Material Notes**

**Description:** Protector was the last wooden vessel built in Marine City in 1919. The Rudder was erected by the Pride & Heritage Group in \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Buildings/Features:**

**Significant Persons:**

**Statement of Significance:**

**References:**

**Surveyor's Comments:**

STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway  
**City:** Marine City      **County:** St. Clair      **Zip:** 48039  
**Current Name:**  
**Historic Name:**

**Photo:** following page

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall  
**NR Eligible:** not NR eligible  
**Contributing:** contributing  
**SHPO Evaluation:**

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:** Monument to World War I Dead

**Photo**

**Filename:** WWI

**Monument**  
**Current Use:** same  
**Owner Type:** Public

**Roll:**                      **Frame:**  
**View:** on cd  
**Credit:** Judith White  
**Caption:** WW I Monument

**Main Building**

**Foundation:**                      **Roof:**  
1.                                      1.  
2.                                      2.  
3.                                      3.  
**Wall:**                                      **Other:**  
1.                                      1.  
2.                                      2.  
3.                                      3.

**Period of Significance:**

**Area of Significance:**

1.  
2.  
3.  
**Arch/Builder:**  
**Date Built**

**Architectural Classification**

**Material Notes**

**Description:** A boulder fitted with a bronze plaque honoring five men of Marine City who died in World War I.

**Other Buildings/Features:**

**Significant Persons:**

**Statement of Significance:**

**References:**

**Surveyor's Comments:**

**STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY**

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway  
**City:** Marine City    **County:** St. Clair    **Zip:** 48039  
**Current Name:**  
**Historic Name:**

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall  
**NR Eligible:** Not NR Eligible  
**Contributing:** Non-Contributing  
**SHPO Evaluation:**

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:**  
**Current Use:** Gazebo/Band Stand  
**Owner Type:** Public

**Photo**

**Filename:** band stand  
**Roll:**            **Frame:**  
**View:** cd  
**Credit:** Judith White  
**Caption:** band stand

**Main Building**

<b>Foundation:</b>	<b>Roof:</b>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
<b>Wall:</b>	<b>Other:</b>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

**Period of Significance:**

**Area of Significance:**  
1.  
2.  
3.  
**Arch/Builder:**  
**Date Built**

Architectural Classification

Material Notes

Description: Wooden Gazebo or band stand erected by the Pride and Heritage Museum in 1974 to replicate the original band stand

Other Buildings/Features:

Significant Persons:

Statement of Significance:

References:

Surveyor's Comments:

STATE OF MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY  
HERITAGE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

**Address**

**Street:** 300 Broadway

**City:** Marine City      **County:** St. Clair      **Zip:** 48039

**Current Name:**

**Historic Name:**

**Photo:** following page

**Evaluations**

**Contributes To:** Marine City City Hall

**NR Eligible:** no

**Contributing:** no

**SHPO Evaluation:**

**Resources on Property/Status**

**Historic Use:**

**Current Use:** flag pole

**Owner Type:** Public

**Photo**

**Filename:** flagpole

**Roll:**                      **Frame:**

**View:** cd

**Credit:** Judith White

**Caption:** flagpole

**Main Building**

**Foundation:**

1.

2.

3.

**Wall:**

1.

2.

3.

**Roof:**

1.

2.

3.

**Other:**

1.

2.

3.

**Period of Significance:**

1884

**Area of Significance:**

1.

2.

3.

**Arch/Builder:**

**Date Built**

**Architectural Classification**

**Material Notes**

**Description:** a modern metal flag pole that replaces a historic ship's mast, now destroyed, used as a flag pole.

**Other Buildings/Features:**

**Significant Persons:**

**Statement of Significance:**

**References:**

**Surveyor's Comments:**









