

FINAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT  
FRANK FARM HISTORIC DISTRICT  
ROCHESTER HILLS, MICHIGAN

INTRODUCTION

In 2002 the city of Rochester Hills engaged Jane C. Busch, LLC, in collaboration with Hamilton Anderson Associates, Inc., to undertake a survey of local historic districts. The survey was designed to augment and update information about the city's designated and potential local historic districts. The recommendations of the survey included designating the Frank Farm on East Auburn Road as a local historic district. Pursuant to Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act (PA 169 of 1970, as amended) and Chapter 118 of the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances, the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee has prepared this report on the Frank Farm.

CHARGE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS STUDY COMMITTEE

The historic districts study committee was established by the Rochester Hills City Council on December 15, 1999, pursuant to the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances, Chapter 118, as amended in 1999. 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 historic district study committee reports to establish or eliminate proposed historic districts. Study committee members serve two year terms. A list of current committee members follows.

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*John Dziurman*, a registered architect with a practice focused on historic preservation, meets the federal professional qualification standards for historic architect. He has served on the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission for twenty years, many of those years as chairperson.

*Peggy Schodowski* has a strong background in research and analysis, and is currently employed part-time as Marketing Director/Research Analyst for a locally-owned company. She has recently provided research assistance to a local private school regarding the historic background of their school building, and has also assisted several local communities with research about historic buildings.

*Richard Stamps* is an associate professor of anthropology at Oakland University. A professional archaeologist with a strong interest in history, he is also a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission.

*Jason Thompson* is chairperson of the Historic Districts Study Committee, and is a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission. He has received a bachelor's degree in history from Oakland University, and a master's degree in public

administration from Oakland University. His academic and work activities include a strong background in research and grant writing.

*Gerard Verschueren* has been involved with many of the city's boards and commissions over the last fifteen years. Originally from the Netherlands, he owned a European company specializing in the repair and restoration of churches and castles. He was previously a historical building advisor and consultant for the state of Ohio and a consultant for the Detroit Roofing Consulting Service regarding historical buildings.

*Lavere Webster* is an art and antiques conservator who lives in one of the city's designated local historic districts. He has served on the board of directors of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society for more than six years.

*Pamela Whateley* is a minister and healing counselor interested in the city's building and development. She served for two years on the subcommittee for the city's Earl Borden Historic Preservation Award.

*Jane C. Busch*, historic preservation consultant, assisted the study committee in its work.

## INVENTORY

A photographic inventory of the proposed district was conducted in 2002 as part of the Rochester Hills historic districts survey. Copies of the inventory forms are located at the Rochester Hills Planning Department, the Rochester Hills Museum, and the State Historic Preservation Office. Additional photographs taken in September 2007 as part of the preparation of this report include the Holtz property, which was not part of the 2002 survey.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The proposed Frank Farm Historic District is located on East Auburn Road in section 36—the southeast corner—of the city of Rochester Hills. The farm is currently divided into three parcels that total 7.93 acres, the remnants of a farm that in the late nineteenth century contained 128 acres, the entire northwest quarter of section 36. The Frank Farm Historic District contains all of the extant buildings associated with the Frank family, consisting of five houses, two garages, workshop, milk house, tool shed, pole barn, and well house. There are also three small storage sheds of recent construction and three temporary structures of undetermined purpose. The district is L-shaped with the bottom of the “L” extending along East Auburn Road. The land is fairly level. Four of the houses are arranged in a line facing the road; from west to east these are 1290, 1304, 1344, and 1356 E. Auburn Road. Outbuildings, including a small fifth house, are behind the houses. Each of the four main houses is accessed by a driveway. An additional driveway enters the district to the west of 1344 and extends to the tool shed and pole barn that are farther back on the property, connecting to the driveways for the houses at 1344 and 1356 to form a semi-circle. The driveway to 1290 is gravel; the driveway to 1356 is paved with asphalt in the front yard; the remainder is dirt.

The north-south property lines at the edges of the district and between each parcel in the district are marked by fences. The western boundary of the district is marked by a wood stockade fence with a low woven wire fence inside of it. The lot lines for 1304 are marked by a chain link fence on the east and south sides; wood fencing on the west side, part of the east side, and dividing the front and rear yards; and woven wire fencing on the sides of the front yard. A chain link fence marks the eastern boundary of the district. The yards immediately around the houses are mostly grass interspersed with trees, decorative shrubs, bedding plants, and flowers. There are a number of large spruce and deciduous trees, including walnut and maple. There are several clusters of large lilac bushes. Behind 1344 and 1356 are large beds of vegetables and flowers, berry bushes, a small corn field, and numerous pear and apple trees. Crops include potatoes, broccoli, zucchini, cucumbers, beans, tomatoes, sunflowers, and gladiolas. The southern portion of the district, south of the pole barn, is a mown field, with a hedge marking the southern boundary.

From west to east and north to south, the buildings are as follows:

**George K. Holtz House** (1290 E. Auburn Road), contributing

One-story, gable-roof T-plan frame house with basement. Concrete block foundation, aluminum siding, asphalt shingle roof. Two entrance doors on west side of house, both with concrete steps. Door toward rear has a gable-roof entrance porch. Awning windows in front extension; mostly 1/1 double-hung windows in remainder of house. Metal chimney in roof of front extension; brick chimney in rear. Built 1945; east side addition 1963.

**Garage**, non-contributing

Front-gabled, two-car frame garage with concrete foundation, aluminum siding, asphalt shingle roof. Built ca. 1946 as one-car garage; expanded into two-car garage in 1978.

**Workshop**, contributing

One-story, rectangular, gable-roof frame building with concrete foundation and asphalt shingle roof. Aluminum siding on three sides; corrugated fiberglass on south (rear) side. Pedestrian door on north side; double swing garage doors with windows on west end. 1/1 double-hung windows on north and east sides. Built in 1950s.

**Lucius L. Frank House** (1304 E. Auburn Road), contributing

Two-story, L-plan, gable-roof frame house with basement; one-story wing on east end and one-story rear ell on west end. Partial-width front porch. Enclosed front and rear porches on wing. The enclosed front and rear porches on the wing have concrete block foundations and asbestos siding. The remainder of the house has a stone foundation and wood clapboard siding. Two entrance doors in front and two in rear. 2/2 double-hung windows in front-gabled section; 1/1 double-hung windows elsewhere. Asphalt shingle roof. Newer brick chimney on front of house; concrete block chimney on west end; older brick chimney in rear ell. Built ca. 1866 as one-and-a-half story upright with one or two one-story wings; a photograph of the house taken before 1900 shows two wings. In the

early 1900s, possibly ca. 1910, the upright and west wing were raised to two stories, and front porches were added to both wings. The remodeled house contained two kitchens—in the east wing and in the west rear ell—and housed two families.

**Brown house/hog house**, contributing

One-story, side-gabled frame house with concrete foundation, aluminum siding, and asphalt shingle roof. Front door into east side. Sliding windows on east side; double-hung windows on north end and west side. Concrete block chimney. Built as a hog house that stood farther back on the lot, near the barn. In the early 1950s George Holtz moved the hog house closer to the Lucius Frank house and enlarged and remodeled it as a residence for rental income. The family called it the brown house.

**Loren B. Frank House** (1344 E. Auburn Road), contributing

Two-story, gable-roof T-plan frame house with basement. Concrete foundation, aluminum siding, and asphalt shingle roof. Large front entrance porch with steeply-pitched gable roof supported by two square wood columns. One-story enclosed rear porch on east side. Wolmanized wood deck with pergola roof on west side toward rear. Front door; rear door into enclosed rear porch; second-story rear door opening to roof of rear porch. Mostly double-hung 1/1 windows. Brick chimney on west side. The house was originally a one-and-a-half story upright with a one-story wing and stood on Dequindre Road. It was likely built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The Franks moved the house to its current location ca. 1916. On the eve of World War II, ca. 1941, they cut off the wing and turned it to parallel to the upright, raised the house to two stories, changed the roof line so that the front portion is side-gabled, and added the current front porch.

**Garage**, contributing

One-and-a-half story, front-gabled frame two-car garage. Clapboard siding and asphalt shingle roof. Sliding garage doors on overhead track; walk-in door on east side. 1/1 double-hung window in each gable end. Built ca. 1940.

**Milk house**, contributing

Small one-story frame building with drop siding and standing seam metal shed roof. Door on north end. One fixed six-pane window on each end. Two swing-up wood panels on west side. Exposed rafter ends. Built by Harold Weaver during the Depression as a roadside stand where he sold cherry pop on the opposite side of Auburn Road. The Franks moved it across the road to their farm to use as a milk house. Currently used for storage.

**Tool shed**, contributing

Gable-roof frame building with log foundation, a combination of vertical plank and plywood siding, and a corrugated metal roof. Doors on east and south sides. Eight-pane fixed window on north side; window opening on east side. Built late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Originally stood further west on the farm; Ray Frank moved it to its present location. Currently used for storage.

**Pole barn, non-contributing**

Side-gabled pole barn on concrete slab with metal siding. Shed-roof rear extension with plywood siding. Corrugated metal roof with some fiberglass panels. Built 1979.

**Ray B. Frank House (1356 E. Auburn Road), contributing**

One-and-a-half story, side-gabled frame house with basement. One-story addition on west side, set back from front. Cross-gabled projection on east side of front façade. Shallow wood deck in front; wood deck in rear. Poured concrete foundation; brick veneer and aluminum siding; asphalt shingle roof. One door on front façade, one on west side, two in rear. Two front picture windows with sidelights. Shed roof dormer in rear with small skylight adjoining. Basement windows. Most of remaining windows are 1/1 double-hung. Brick chimney at peak of roof. Built 1949–50. Enclosed porch built on west side in 1967; remodeled into dining room addition in 1972. Rear deck built 1990s; front deck built 2005.

**Well house, contributing**

Front-gabled frame well house with horizontal plank walls and wood shingle roof. Concrete steps descend into doorway in east gable end; plank door is currently inside the building. Small window opening in west gable end. Hooks in roof rafters are from previous use of roof on smoke house. Built 1970s using roof from older stone smokehouse on the farm.

COUNT OF HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Frank Farm Historic District contains ten historic (contributing) and two non-historic (non-contributing) resources.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Frank Farm Historic District consists of three parcels:

70-15-36-126-004 (1290 E. Auburn Rd.)

70-15-36-126-005 (1304 E. Auburn Rd.)

70-15-36-126-029 (1344 and 1356 E. Auburn Rd.)

The district is bounded as follows:

Beginning at the northwest corner of parcel #70-15-36-126-004, proceed southward 400 feet along the western lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-004, then eastward 100 feet along the southern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-004 to the southeast corner of the parcel, then continue eastward 69.35 feet along the lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-029, then southward 335.23 feet along the western lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-029 to the southwest corner of the parcel, then eastward 375 feet along the southern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-029 to the southeast corner of the parcel, then northward 736.57 feet along the eastern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-029 to the northeast corner of the parcel, then westward 300.84 feet along the northern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-029 to the northeast corner of parcel #70-15-36-126-005, then continue westward 144.35 feet along the northern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-005 to the northwest corner of the

parcel, then continue 100 feet along the northern lot line of parcel #70-15-36-126-004 to the place of beginning.

#### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Frank Farm Historic District contains all of the extant buildings constructed by Lucius L. Frank and his descendents and the former farmland that is still held by the family. Until the late 1950s, the Frank Farm consisted of the entire northwest quarter of section 36, approximately 128 acres. To the east of the district, on land that was formerly part of the farm, is Reuther Middle School, built in 1973. To the west of the district, on land that was formerly part of the farm, is the Avon Manor Estates subdivision, built in the late 1950s and 1960s. Where it fronts East Auburn and John R. roads, most of the former farm consists of residential development. Away from the road, the southern part of the former farm is undeveloped; much of it is woodland. North of the district on the north side of East Auburn Road is a fire station and a mix of residential development dating from pre-World War II to the 1990s.

#### HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

A collection of predominantly Archaic period Indian artifacts gathered on the Frank Farm indicates the presence of native people prior to the arrival of European Americans. The recorded history of the Frank Farm began in the early nineteenth century, when John Frank purchased land in the northwest quarter of section 36. John Frank (1799–1887) was part of the initial wave of settlement of Avon Township, arriving in 1823, six years after the first white settler in the township.<sup>1</sup> John came from Vermont, unlike the majority of Avon Township settlers, who came from New York. In July 1823 he wrote to his mother in Vermont: “I arrived in the territory of Michigan the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, I had rather a tedious journey, after traveling two hundred miles my feet became so sore that I was obliged to take the stage which cost me 25 dollars more than if I had traveled on foot. My whole expense amounted to fifty dollars.”<sup>2</sup> John purchased 97 acres of land from the government—the east half of the southeast quarter of section 26. While he was building a log house on his land, John boarded with the family of Cyrus Chipman, who two years earlier had settled on the southwest quarter of section 26. In December 1823 John Frank married Cyrus Chipman’s daughter, Arabella (1805–1846).

Following his marriage, John worked building the territorial road from Detroit to Ypsilanti and as a surveyor in the western part of the Michigan territory in addition to working his farm. In 1831 he joined the Michigan territorial militia and by 1837 had been promoted to Colonel. In that year he deeded land on his farm to the school district for the district #3 school, which became known as the Frank school. In about 1840 John built a larger house for his growing family. John and Arabella had eleven children, of

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<sup>1</sup> When Oakland County was created in 1820, the area that would become Avon Township was part of Oakland Township. Avon Township was separated from Oakland Township in 1835. In 1984 the township incorporated as the city of Rochester Hills.

<sup>2</sup> John Frank to Hannah Frank, 13 July 1823. Typed transcription, Ray Frank file, Local History Collection, Rochester Hills Public Library.

whom seven lived to adulthood: Alta, Mary Ann, John C., Nancy, Edwin, Arabella O., and Lucius. Arabella Chipman Frank died in 1846, and in 1849 John married Adeline Kettell (1799–1886) of Troy, Michigan. John and Adeline had no children. John Frank’s financial success is evidenced by additional land purchases in Troy and Avon townships, among them the northwest quarter of section 36 in Avon Township. By 1841 he owned the west half of the northwest quarter, and between 1855 and 1860 he purchased the east half of the northwest quarter.

Lucius Lyon Frank (1843–1939) was the youngest of John and Arabella’s children to live to adulthood. Lucius stayed on his father’s farm until August 1862, when he enlisted to fight in the Civil War, joining Company B of the Twenty-Second Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Lucius served thirty-five months in the Union Army, receiving his honorable discharge in Detroit in July 1865. Letters that Lucius and his brother Edwin—who also served—wrote to their family at home describe their wartime experiences and refer to events at home such as the harvest and who was getting married. In a February 1863 letter to his father written from Camp Ella Bishop in Kentucky, Lucius laid out a detailed plan to have his father invest in sheep on Lucius’s behalf. “I want my money to increase as fast as it can, so that I shall have something when I get home. If I should have to stay 3 years you know I will be 21 and past when I get home.”<sup>3</sup> In 1865 Lucius returned to Avon Township and to farming. He farmed his father’s land on shares and built a house (figure 1) on the land in section 36. In 1867 Lucius married Adeline Kent (1841–1923) of Boston. Adeline Kent’s mother was the sister of Adeline Kettell Frank; apparently Lucius met his future wife when she was visiting her aunt in Michigan. Lucius and Adeline had eight children, of whom seven survived to adulthood: John R., Lucius H., Joseph, William, Kate, Harry, and Loren.

The 1870 U.S. census of the products of agriculture lists John Frank as owner of 240 acres of farmland, which approximates the total acreage of the two farms in section 26 and section 36 as shown on an 1872 atlas map. Though the two farms were listed under John Frank, other sources indicate that by then Lucius was responsible for much if not all of the farm work. The Franks’ livestock consisted of twelve horses, seven milk cows, four other cattle, forty-four sheep, and ten swine. Crops consisted of winter wheat, Indian corn, oats, buckwheat, wood, Irish potatoes, hay, and clover seed. The Franks produced six hundred pounds of butter. With wheat and wool as its leading products, the Franks’ farm operation was typical of Avon Township and Oakland County at that time.

The 1880 census for agriculture lists Lucius L. as the person conducting the farm (a total of 230 acres), specifying that he rented the farm for a share of products. The census shows that some significant changes had taken place in the ten year interval since 1870. The number of horses had decreased to seven, while the number of sheep had increased to seventy-three. There were thirty-two chickens, which were not enumerated in 1870. The Franks’ wheat production decreased from 475 to 290 bushels, oats decreased from 350 to 282 bushels, and buckwheat stayed the same at 100 bushels. Corn production increased from 350 to 400 bushels, and potatoes increased from 200 to 775 bushels.

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<sup>3</sup> Lucius L. Frank to John Frank, 18 February 1863. Typed transcription, Lucius L. Frank file, Rochester Hills Museum.

Whereas the 1870 census did not list any orchard products for the Franks, in 1880 they had 180 bearing apple trees and 12 bearing peach trees. To some extent the changes in the Frank farm are consistent with broader changes in Oakland County farming—wheat declined from its peak in 1870, while potatoes and fruit increased in importance. Sheep farming, however, began a steady decline in Oakland County after 1880, whereas the Franks increased their flock appreciably.

Presumably John Frank bequeathed the farm in section 36 to Lucius; an 1896 map of Avon Township shows Lucius as owner of a 121 acre farm—the entire northwest quarter except for 8 ½ acres in the southwest corner that was owned by Lucius’s brother Edwin. In 1902 the former John Frank Farm in section 26 became part of D. M. Ferry & Company’s 568 acre Oakview Seed Farm, and John Frank’s house was occupied by seed farm personnel. Eventually the house was moved to Hamlin Road; it is no longer extant.

In 1909 Kate Frank (1876–1958), the only daughter of Lucius and Adeline, married Henry Holtz (1881–1934), who worked at Oakview Seed Farm. The couple made their home with Kate’s parents.<sup>4</sup> It was at about this time that the Franks enlarged the home that Lucius had built following the Civil War, raising the center portion and west wing to two stories. A photo of the remodeled house shows Lucius, Adeline, Kate, and Kate’s eldest child, Anna Belle, who was born in March 1912 (figure 2). The Holtz family lived in the west side of the house, where they had their own kitchen, and their five children grew up there: Anna Belle, Frank, Mary, Fred, and George.

Loren Burch Frank (1882–1954) was the only one of Lucius and Adeline’s sons to stay and work on the family farm. In 1914 Loren married Alberta Uren (1886–1966) of Lake Linden, Michigan. Shortly after the marriage, the Franks moved a house to the farm from Dequindre Road to serve as the young couple’s residence (figure 3). Loren and Alberta’s only child, Ray Burgan, was born in this house in 1917. By 1920 Loren had taken charge of the farm, though Lucius retained ownership of the property until his death. The 1920 population census describes the farm as a general farming operation. The livestock and crops were much the same as in 1880. Potatoes were the main cash crop; Ray recalled that they stored hundreds of bushels of potatoes in the stone cellar of his grandfather Lucius’s house to sell during the winter. They had eight Guernsey milk cows, but the emphasis of their livestock operation was on their one hundred sheep. Loren gained renown for the quality of the wool from his sheep, winning state, national, and international awards in the 1930s. By then dairy farming predominated in Oakland County—the number of sheep in the county declined from 151,700 in 1880 to 24,700 in 1930.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Frank Farm was more unusual in the 1920s than it had been in the 1870s. At 118 acres, the Frank Farm was also significantly larger than most Avon Township farms, which averaged 65 acres in 1939.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Although a 1930 atlas map shows Henry Holtz as owner of the 8 ½ acre parcel in the southwest corner of the northwest quarter of section 36—the parcel owned in 1896 by Edwin Frank—there is no evidence that Henry and Kate Holtz and their children lived there.

<sup>5</sup> Eula Pray, *A History of Avon Township, 1820–1940* (Ann Arbor: Nonce Press, 1986), 155–56.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Ray Frank helped with chores on the farm as soon as he was old enough. He recalls the numerous outbuildings that were needed to prepare products for market as well as produce much of the family's own food. Directly behind the Lucius Frank house were a wood shed, honey house, workshop, tool shed, and hog house. Further east were a cooker house, where hogs were scalded after they were killed; a smoke house; and two chicken houses, accommodating between fifty and one hundred chickens. When fresh milk became an important product, the Franks moved a roadside stand built across Auburn Road to the farm and used it as a milk house. The centerpiece of the farm was the 90 x 24 foot barn, of which the oldest portion had been built by Lucius after the Civil War. The barn had stalls for horses and cows on the east end; a grain bin; hay bay; buggy shed; corn crib; and a sheep shed attached to the rear.<sup>7</sup> By 1938 the barn was wired for electricity. At that date both houses had electric lights, but they were still heated by stoves. Each house had its own outhouse and garage.

When Lucius Frank died in 1939, he divided the farm among his seven children. Kate Holtz had continued to live with her father following the 1934 death of her husband Henry from injuries sustained in an explosion at the seed farm. Lucius left his house and thirty-six acres to Kate. Loren Frank inherited forty-two acres that included the house where his family lived. Loren subsequently purchased his brothers' shares of the farm, but Kate retained hers, continuing to live in the old house. Loren and Ray carried on the farming operation. In 1941, when Ray was contemplating getting married, Loren and Ray remodeled and enlarged their house. Ray did the drawings for the project, which involved cutting off the one-story wing, turning it to parallel the one-and-a-half-story upright, raising the house to two stories, and building a new front porch (figure 4). They also modernized the house's mechanical systems, installing an oil furnace and indoor plumbing with a hot water heating system. They finished the work as the war started. Ray remained on the farm during World War II, as farming was considered essential to the war effort.

In 1945 Ray Frank married Janice Guthrie (b. 1926) of Avon Township. In that year George K. Holtz (1924–1995), the youngest child of Kate and Henry, returned from service in the U.S. Navy and built a small, one-story house just west of the Lucius Frank house, where his mother still lived. George married Myrna Miner (b. 1927) of Oakland County in 1947. He worked for Chrysler. By 1949 Ray and Janice had two children and a third on the way, and they began building a house to the east of the house where they were living with Ray's parents. They designed the house themselves, and when the construction workers went on strike, did much of the construction themselves. Completed in 1950, the one-and-a-half story house had a fireplace and picture window in the living room, a dining nook in the kitchen, and four bedrooms. A large freezer allowed them to reduce the amount of time and effort they spent canning fruits and vegetables. In 1952 Ray began work part time at A & P, while he and his father continued a full-time farming operation. They had about one hundred sheep, eight milk cows, four brood sows, as many as one hundred chickens, and a team of horses. Their primary crops were wheat, oats, corn, and potatoes.

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<sup>7</sup> The barn burned in 1979.

Loren Frank died in 1954. At the time of his death he was chairman of the Avon Township Zoning Board and a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals—planning for future land use in the township even while he represented its disappearing agricultural heritage. The following year Ray began to work full time at A & P. At first he returned home in the evenings to take care of the animals, but soon after the Franks sold their livestock. George Holtz moved the hog house away from the barn and closer to his mother’s house, remodeling it as a rental house to bring in income for his mother. Kate Holtz died in 1958, and the break-up of the farm began soon after. Except for a roughly one-acre parcel containing George Holtz’s house, the western two-thirds of the farm was sold, including the Lucius Frank house. In the late 1950s and 1960s the Avon Manor Estates subdivision was built in the northwest portion of the former farm. Some years later Ray Frank sold about thirty-six of the forty-two acres that Loren Frank had inherited—the eastern side of the farm—to the school district. Reuther Middle School was built there in 1973. The six acres that the Franks retained contained Loren and Ray Frank’s houses and the barn, until the latter burned in 1979. Ray retired from A & P in 1984. Ray and Janice have continued to grow and sell fruit and vegetables. Though it is a small operation, it is the only remnant of commercial farming in Rochester Hills.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISTRICT

Michigan’s *Local Historic Districts Act*, PA 169 of 1970, as amended, requires local historic district study committees to be guided by the evaluation criteria for the National Register of Historic Places in evaluating the significance of historic resources. The act also requires study committees to be guided by any criteria established or approved by the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (Section 3(1)(c)). Shortly after the 1992 amendments to the *Local Historic Districts Act*, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network issued a guide to the amendments that explained how the National Register criteria should be used: “While communities must be ‘guided’ by the National Register criteria, they are not bound by them; communities are free to establish criteria which are guided by the national criteria but relate to local conditions, history, and character.”<sup>8</sup> In 2002, the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries issued criteria that elaborate on historic district boundary determinations and single resource districts. Chapter 118, “Historic Districts,” of the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances reiterates the requirement for study committees to be guided by the National Register criteria and any criteria established or approved by the Department of History, Arts and Libraries (Section 118-130(3)).

In accordance with these legal documents and guidelines, the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee has determined that the Frank Farm Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with a pattern of historical events that has contributed significantly to Rochester Hills history. The areas of significance are agriculture and social history. The district’s period of significance is

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<sup>8</sup> Michigan Historic Preservation Network, “A Guide to Michigan’s Local Historic Districts Act” (Michigan Historic Preservation Network, Lansing, Mi., n.d., photocopy), 3. The Michigan Historic Preservation Network was one of the primary authors of the amendments to the Local Historic Districts Act.

from 1865, when Lucius L. Frank established the Frank Farm, to 1958, when Kate Frank Holtz died and family members began to sell off portions of the farm.

### **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. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.**

The Frank Farm represents three generations of the Frank family, who trace their presence in Avon Township/Rochester Hills to the arrival of John Frank in 1823 and who still occupy the farm today. The Frank family may have the longest tenure of any family in Rochester Hills. The Franks built, moved, and altered buildings on the farm, adapting them as needed as the family grew and changed and as Avon Township grew and changed. Until the mid-twentieth century Avon Township was predominantly a farming community, and the Frank Farm was a full-time farming operation. Changes on the farm after World War II represent the transition to a non-farm economy, although the Franks are unique in Rochester Hills in that they have not abandoned farming completely. The history of the Frank family and the farm buildings is unusually well documented, both through written documents and photographs that preserve the earlier history and through the memories of Ray Frank, born on the farm in 1917. This history provides insight into the function and meaning of ordinary-looking buildings and adds to the value of the farm as a representative of the city's history.

The primary buildings on the farm are four houses that document three generations of the Frank family. Lucius Frank, returning Civil War veteran, built a modest, vernacular Greek Revival style house ca. 1866 when he started his farm and his family, then enlarged it and added a second kitchen ca. 1910 to accommodate his daughter's family. When Loren Frank started his family in 1914, the Franks moved a house from Dequindre Road to the farm. In 1941, when Ray Frank was contemplating marriage, he and his father enlarged and modernized this house. Following World War II, two members of the third generation built new houses on the family farm. In choosing to work for an auto manufacturer, George Holtz represented a pattern that had become increasingly common in Avon Township during the twentieth century. Yet he built his house and raised his family next door to his mother, who was still living in his grandfather's house. Ray Frank, on the other hand, represented the persistence of farming. When his family of four taxed the capacity of the house they shared with his parents, Ray built a new house next door. The houses show some influences from current architectural styles—Arts and Crafts porch columns on the remodeled Loren Frank house, a fashionable picture window on Ray Frank's house. Yet more than current styles, the houses reflect the needs of the family, resulting in distinctive designs.

The farm outbuildings demonstrate the same self-reliance and resourcefulness as the houses. When fresh milk became an important product for them, the Franks moved a roadside stand built across Auburn Road to the farm and used it as a milk house. About the time that they enlarged and modernized their house, Loren and Ray Frank tore down their old garage and built a new one. After the livestock were sold, George Holtz moved and remodeled the hog house into a house to bring in rental income, and built a workshop for himself. The tool shed was moved twice, and Ray reused the roof of the old smokehouse when he built a well house.

Ten out of the twelve buildings on the Frank Farm contribute to its historic significance. The Lucius Frank house looks very much as it did in 1913. The most visible exterior changes are the enclosure of the front and back porches on the east wing and a brick chimney on the front of the house, covering the diamond window in the gable. The addition of aluminum siding and some minor changes in the rear have not significantly altered the Loren B. Frank house, which retains its distinctive appearance. As was typical of small houses built in the early post-World War II era, a side addition was made to the George Holtz house, which also received aluminum siding. The original L-plan house, however, with characteristic awning windows in front, is still readily evident. Similarly, a side addition made to the Ray Frank house is set back from the main house and easily distinguished from the original house; the same is true of the decks. As a farmstead, the integrity of the district is compromised by the loss of the historic barn in 1979. Nevertheless, the tool shed, milk house, and well house convey a sense of the agricultural history of the complex. Although the well house post-dates the period of significance for the district, it is counted as a contributing structure because it is a traditional agricultural building type, it has the roof of the older smokehouse, and it represents the same pattern of adapting to changing circumstances that characterizes the history of the Frank Farm. The landscape, with its vegetable gardens, cornfield, berry bushes, and fruit trees, is strikingly different from the nearby housing developments and school and is instrumental in establishing the historic feeling of the district.

With buildings spanning nearly a century, the Frank Farm represents the different periods in a family's history better than any other property in Rochester Hills. Its closest comparison would be the Van Hoosen Farm in the Stoney Creek Historic District, which was begun by Lemuel Taylor in 1823. The oldest building on the Van Hoosen Farm is the ca. 1840 farmhouse; however, the current appearance of the farmhouse dates to its remodeling in the 1920s. Except for the mid-nineteenth century Red House, which was moved to the farm in the 1950s, the extant buildings on the Van Hoosen Farm all date to the early twentieth century and primarily represent the 350-acre model dairy farm that Sarah Van Hoosen Jones created from her ancestors' farm. This represents a different aspect of Avon Township's agricultural history than is represented by the Frank Farm. Comparison may also be made to the Levi Cole Farm in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. Levi Cole purchased the land in 1825 and built the extant Greek Revival-style house ca. 1835–50. The farm remained in the family of Cole's son-in-law, Theodore Cook, into the early twentieth century. With two houses, a barn, milk house, chicken house, and storage building, the Cole Farm is one of the most intact farmsteads in Rochester Hills. At least two of the buildings, however—the barn and the second

house—were built after the farm had passed out of the family. Altogether, there are less than twenty farmsteads (consisting of a farmhouse and at least one agricultural outbuilding) left in Rochester Hills, representing a very small proportion of the 229 farms in Avon Township in 1939.<sup>9</sup> As long as they retain integrity, all of these farmsteads are worthy of preservation as representatives of the township’s agricultural history.

**D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.**

Ray Frank’s collection of artifacts found on the Frank Farm includes twelve points, two bifaces, two celts, and a bannerstone, dating primarily to the Archaic period. These artifacts were found throughout the farm, from what is now east of the Reuther school to John R. Road on the west. Further investigation is needed to determine the archaeological potential of the current historic district, which represents only a small portion of the former Frank Farm.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee finds that the Frank Farm is significant as the tangible presence of one family’s long history in Avon Township. The Frank family and their farm embody the essential patterns of the township’s history. The study committee recommends that the Frank Farm be designated as a local historic district.

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Figure 1. Lucius L. Frank House, before 1900. Courtesy of Ray Frank.



Figure 2. Lucius L. Frank House after remodeling, ca. 1913. From left to right: Adeline Frank holding Anna Bell Holtz, Kate Holtz, Lucius Frank. Courtesy of Ray Frank.



Figure 3. Loren B. Frank House, 1916. Courtesy of Ray Frank.



Figure 4. Loren B. Frank House after remodeling, 1960. Courtesy of Ray Frank.



Photo 1. George K. Holtz House, 1290 E. Auburn Road, looking southeast.



Photo 2. Lucius L. Frank House, 1304 E. Auburn Road, looking southeast.



Photo 3. Loren B. Frank House, 1344 E. Auburn Road, looking southwest.



Photo 4. Ray B. Frank House, 1356 E. Auburn Road, looking southwest. Milk house visible on right.



Photo 5. Well house, looking southwest.



Photo 6. Tool shed, looking southwest.



Photo 7. Loren Frank House garage, looking northeast. Milk house visible on right.



Photo 8. View south from behind Ray Frank House. Pole barn on right.



Photo 9. Reuther School, looking southeast from rear yard of Ray Frank House.



Photo 10. North side of East Auburn Road, looking northwest from in front of Ray Frank House.



Photo 11. Avon Manor Estates subdivision, corner of John R. and East Auburn roads, looking southeast.

All photographs taken by Jane Busch, September 6, 2007.

MAP OF PROPOSED DISTRICT:

