

FINAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT
WINKLER MILL POND HISTORIC DISTRICT
ROCHESTER HILLS, MICHIGAN
DRAFT – December 2023

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 survey recommended that the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District be studied further to potentially revise its boundaries to eliminate the majority of the non-contributing properties constructed on the southeast side of the Mill Pond on Washington Road. As a result of that survey, in January 2020, the City Council authorized the city’s historic preservation consultant, Kristine Kidorf of Kidorf Preservation Consulting, to conduct the re-survey of the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. That survey was completed in late 2022, after a delay due to Covid-19 and workload.

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.

Pursuant to Chapter 118, Section 129, the City Council referred a request to study the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District to the Historic Districts Study Committee on April 17, 2023 to determine if the district boundaries should be changed. The study committee is to make a recommendation back to Council within one year.

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Melinda Deel has been a resident of Rochester Hills for nineteen years and also serves on the Rochester Hills Public Library Board of Trustees. An attorney, she has a deep interest in the history of Rochester Hills and is also a musician.

Julie Granthen is chairperson of the Historic Districts Study Committee and is also a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission. She has been a Rochester Hills resident for over fifty years. She grew up in the community and is a graduate of Adams High School, Oakland University (B.A. Economics and M.B.A.) and the University of Toledo (J.D.). She is a retired professor and attorney and serves on the Oakland University Alumni Board of Directors.

Bryan Lemanski moved to Rochester Hills from Clawson where he served on the Zoning Board. An engineer and attorney, Mr. Lemanski has been involved with the Michigan Intellectual Property Law Association and the University of Michigan Alumni Mentor-Mentee Program.

David McCracken is a Real Estate Investor/Property Manager who has lived in Rochester Hills for 8 years and is interested in the city's history. He also serves on the Green Space Advisory Board and is a board member of the Junior Chamber International Rochester Area.

Michael McGunn is a retired architect and has lived in Rochester Hills for 23 years. He previously served on the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Building Authority. He was treasurer of the Irish Genealogical Society of Michigan.

Jason Thompson serves as Vice-Chairperson of the HDSC and is also Chairperson of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission. He has received a bachelor's degree in history from Oakland University, and a Master of Public Administration from Oakland University. His academic and work activities include a strong background in research and grant writing.

Charles Tischer is also a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals. A native of the Rochester Hills area, he has a BA in Political Science/Public Policy from Western Michigan University. He is a Trustee of the Avondale Board of Education.

Kristine M. Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting, historic preservation consultant, assisted the study committee with their work.

INVENTORY

The Winkler Mill Pond Historic District was locally designated in 1978 and survey forms were prepared and are located at the Van Hoosen Farm Museum. A photographic inventory of the 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. A new survey with a new report, photographs and inventory forms were prepared between Fall of 2020 and 2022 as part of the preparation of this report.

STUDY COMMITTEE PROCESS

On August 10, 2023, the HDSC adopted the draft Preliminary Historic District Study Committee Report. It was transmitted by staff to the State Historic Preservation Office and the Rochester Hills Planning Commission for review and comment.

The city notified all property owners within the existing district of the educational session and public hearing.

An educational open house was held on September 14, 2023, at the city offices from 5:30 to 6:30. Two property owners attended. One non-contributing property owner was in support of the smaller district. The property owner at 1921 Washington was concerned about being eliminated from the district as she has a historic house. She has since provided additional historic photographs and information on her property.

On September 29, 2023, staff received the comments on the report from the State Historic Preservation Office which recommended changes to the district boundaries and to the report.

On September 19, 2023, the Rochester Hills City Planning Commission accepted the report as written with no comments.

On October 12, 2023, the HDSC held a public hearing on the proposed boundary revision. At least three residents were opposed to the district being revised and raised concerns that in the future Washington Road would be modified, changing the rural setting that presently exists and which has been maintained as many of the newer properties are set back from the road.

With only four members in attendance, the HDSC opted to postpone consideration of the final decision and report until the November meeting when more members could attend, and the public comments could be further discussed.

The HDSC asked that another letter be sent to the property owners throughout the district explaining the process.

At the November 9, 2023, HDSC meeting additional public comment was generally in favor of keeping the existing district boundaries the same. The HDSC discussed how the portion of the district along Washington Road still contributed to the district because the majority of the non-contributing houses are set well back from the road and the rural setting of Washington Road still contributes to the district. Therefore, Washington Road itself is a contributing feature in the district. The HDSC also requested that 1921 Washington Road be changed to contributing as the property was constructed during the period of significance, has history that relates to the district, and that the changes to the house were approved by the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission.

This revised draft Final Historic District Study Committee Report has a revised recommendation and incorporates comments from the State Historic Preservation Office that remain applicable to the HDSC recommendation that the district boundaries remain as they presently exist.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The *Winkler Mill Historic District* is an approximately 112.5-acre district located in the northeast corner of the City of Rochester Hills. Centered around Winkler Mill Road and Winkler Mill Pond, the district has rolling terrain and is heavily forested. The centerpiece of the district is Winkler Mill Pond, all of the properties surrounding the pond have slopes to the water's edge. Two dams create two streams which then merge into one stream at the south end of the pond. The southwest half of the district along Winkler Mill Road retains more of its historic rural setting, the houses along the southeast bank of the pond that front on Washington Road also retain the rural setting as the newer houses have deep setbacks. The vegetation in the district is primarily mature deciduous trees with coniferous trees and shrubs used in landscaping.

The eastern boundary of the existing historic district is Washington Road which runs northeast from Tienken Road. Winkler Mill Road runs southwest from Mead Road, the City's northern boundary, it then turns east where it descends down across the stream and up a steep hill where it intersects with Washington Road. Neither road is paved although Washington Road is wider and has significantly more vehicular traffic. Both roads retain their rural characteristics of a dirt or gravel surface, narrow or non-existent shoulders, and vegetation along the edges. Both roads are contributing elements in the district.

The Stoney Creek Historic District abuts the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District boundary to the south. Surrounding the existing historic district to the south, east and far west are numerous subdivisions and houses constructed since 1990. The city boundary is the north end of the district. Stoney Creek Metropark and Stoney Creek Lake are located north of the city boundary.

The properties on the northwest side of Winkler Mill Pond consist of the twenty-acre farm at 6081 Winkler Mill Road and two parcels containing houses constructed after 1960. The farm is the largest property in the existing and proposed district and is located at the northwest edge. First established about 1835 by Levi and Maria Cole, the property contains two houses, a barn, and several other agricultural outbuildings. The newer houses to the south on Winkler Mill Road also contain outbuildings such as garages and small barns.

The properties at the south edge of the pond and on the south side of Winkler Mill Road contain nineteenth century houses and outbuildings related to milling and the early settlement of the area. These include the remains of the dam and embankment from the original mill which are on a vacant parcel, the Von Isser House at 6400 Winkler Mill Road, and the house at 6425 Winkler Mill Road. The property at 1740 Washington Road on the east side of Washington Road, across from the intersection with Winkler Mill Road, is a Greek Revival style house constructed about 1840.

Except for the house at 1921 Washington Road, the properties in the district on the east bank of Winkler Mill Pond all contain houses that have been constructed since 1970, with the majority being constructed between 1980 and 2015. Except for the property at 1740 Washington, the same is true of the properties on both sides of Washington Road south of Winkler Mill Road.

Properties that contribute to the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District- Boundary Change.

1740 Washington Road – One of only a few examples in Rochester Hills of a classic cottage, 1 ½ story tall, side gabled, Greek Revival house. The house appears in the 1872 atlas as belonging to S. Price. From 1959 to about 1990 the property housed the Red Barn Nursery run by Mrs. L. H. Carter. The detached garage constructed in the 1990s does not contribute to the district.

1921 Washington Road – A two-story house with two additions constructed about 1920 by two Detroit Northeastern High School teachers, Edith M. Kimball and Virginia M. Jackson. The women and their extended families spent summers and weekends at the property.

Von Isser House – 6400 Winkler Mill Rd. – A house, guest cottage, and a garage are located on this property, and all contribute to the district. The main house is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style and was constructed by the Von Issers about 1918. Mrs. Dorothea Von Isser (nee King) was the sister of Kent King, a longtime resident on Winkler Mill Pond and owner of the L.B. King Company in Detroit.

6425 Winkler Mill Road – Part of the Winkler Mill property until 1975, the house retains its original Greek Revival characteristics even though it was remodeled in the 1920s and 1930s by Frances Hosmer and her daughter Dorothy Brown. One of the two mill dams constructed by John Hersey in 1825 creating Winkler Mill Pond, and the stream created by the dam, are contained on this property and contribute to the district. The barn, playhouse, and shed on the property are newer and do not contribute to the district.

Cole House and Farm - 6081 Winkler Mill Road – The basilica Greek Revival farmhouse and the associated barn, milkhouse and chicken house are part of the farm established by Levi Cole in 1825. It is one of the most intact concentrations of historic farm buildings remaining in Rochester Hills. The second house and garage on the property were constructed about 1923 and contribute to the district.

Winkler Mill Pond – A long narrow pond created by the mill dams at the south end of the pond near Winkler Mill Road. The south dam and stream are part of the 6425 Winkler Mill property.

North dam, stream, and mill foundation – on vacant parcel 70-15-01-227-012, all three resources contribute to the district.

Washington Road – A two-lane dirt and gravel road running northeast/southwest between Tienken Road to the south and Dequindre Road to the north. The road has little to no shoulders and embankments and vegetation run along the road. Because most of

the newer houses have deep setbacks and are not visible from the road it still retains its rural setting.

Winkler Mill Road – A two-lane dirt and gravel road running northwest/southeast from Washington Road on the southeast to and beyond Mead Road, the Rochester Hills city boundary to the north. The road has little to no shoulders and vegetation runs along the side of the road. The road retains its characteristics of a rural, dirt road.

COUNT OF HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES

The approximately 112-acre historic district has 64 resources, 20 are contributing and 44 are non-contributing. Thirty-one percent of the resources contribute to the district.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District*, consists of twenty-nine contiguous parcels plus the Winkler Mill Pond, and the portions of Washington Road and Winkler Mill Road within the district boundaries. The parcels surround the pond, which includes the mill foundation, two dams and the two streams that converge, and parcels on both sides of Winkler Mill Road, and both sides of Washington Road. The district boundaries are described as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of Winkler Mill Road and the northern boundary line of Parcel 15-01-266-001 (aka 6081 Winkler Mill Road) which is also the northern City limits and moving eastward along the northern city boundary line to the northeast corner of the boundary of the City of Rochester Hills, then southward along the city boundary line to the southeast corner of parcel 15-01-227-036 (aka 1965 Washington Road). Then in a southwesterly direction along Washington Road to its intersection with the northwest corner of Parcel 15-01-277-019 (aka 1820 Carter Road), then southwesterly along the south boundary line of said parcel to the northwest corner of Parcel 15-01-278-004 (aka 1700 Washington Road). Then easterly, southerly, and westerly along the north, east, and south boundaries of said parcel to the intersection with the northeast corner of parcel 15-01-278-002 (aka 1610 Washington Road) and continuing easterly along the south boundary of said parcel, and the south boundary of parcel 15-01-278-002 (aka 1590 Washington Road) to the intersection of Washington Road. Then northeasterly along Washington Road to the intersection with the southeast corner of parcel 15-01-201-006 (aka 1651 Washington Road), then northwesterly along the west boundary of said parcel, and continuing northwesterly on the west boundary of parcel 15-01-201-025 (aka 1701 Washington Road), following that boundary of said parcel northward and continuing north along the west boundary of parcel 15-01-201-02. The following the north boundary of said parcel southeasterly to the northwest corner of parcel 15-01-201-022 (aka 6250 Winkler Mill Road), then following the north boundary of said parcel to its intersection with Winkler Mill Road. Then continuing northwesterly along Winkler Mill Road to the point of beginning (the intersection of Winkler Mill Road and the northern boundary line of Parcel 15-01-266-001 (aka 6081 Winkler Mill Road).

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The proposed district boundaries of the *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District* are the same as those when the district was locally designated in 1978. The district contains the concentration of houses, outbuildings, and cultural features such as the pond, roads, and dams that were constructed during the district's period of significance (c. 1835-1945), contribute to the history and architecture of the district, and retain integrity.

HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

The history of the City of Rochester Hills and the *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District*, are captured on pages 22 and 23 of the *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey*, written by Jane Busch in 2002 and quoted below.

“The first European Americans to make a permanent home in what became Avon Township were James Graham and his family who built a log cabin near Paint Creek in 1817. John Hersey arrived the following year, and in 1819 he and three partners built a sawmill on Paint Creek, the first of many mills to take advantage of the waterpower afforded by Paint Creek, Stony Creek, and the Clinton River. Oakland County was established in 1820 with two townships: Oakland (including what became Avon) and Bloomfield. In that year the census counted 330 people in the county, of whom 129 lived in Oakland Township. The 1820s were years of rapid growth for the township: by 1830 the population had increased to 1300. The 1825 completion of the Erie Canal brought an influx of settlers to Michigan. Construction of corduroy roads from Detroit to Pontiac and from Royal Oak to Rochester made it somewhat easier for settlers to travel into Oakland County. The settlement that grew up around the homes of Graham and Hersey was platted as the village of Rochester in 1826. Meanwhile, in 1823 Lemuel Taylor, Sr. and his large family settled north of Rochester near Stony Creek. By the time Stony Creek Village was platted in 1830 it included a sawmill, gristmill, blacksmith shop, store, post office, and school. Cemeteries are another sign of settlement: Mount Avon, Stony Creek, and Brewster Cemeteries all had burials by the 1820s.

In 1835 Avon Township was separated from Oakland Township. In 1837, the year that Michigan became a state, the U.S. government completed the sale of all land in Avon Township. As the land was cleared an agricultural economy was established, mostly subsistence farming in the early years. Wheat was the most important food crop, and more grist and flouring mills were built. The architecture was typical of a rural, agricultural area with farmsteads throughout the township and commercial and industrial buildings concentrated in and around Rochester and Stony Creek. Efforts to improve transportation included the aborted Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal and the more successful plank road turnpike from Royal Oak to Rochester.

Like the rest of the country, Avon Township was affected by the Civil War as its men joined the army, and after the war by the technological and social changes

that ensued. In 1869 the inhabitants of Rochester voted to incorporate as a village. Agriculture grew and became increasingly market oriented, with wheat and wool the chief cash crops. The trend toward commercial agriculture was accelerated by the railroads. The first passenger train arrived in Rochester in 1872, and a second rail line began service to the village in 1879. Industry became more diverse, including factories that made wood products, paper products, and woolen textiles.

Avon Township entered the twentieth century with its agricultural economy still predominant but changing. Large commercial farms, such as Van Hoosen, and corporate farms, specifically Ferry-Morse and Parkedale, dominated local agriculture. Wheat and wool production declined sharply while dairy and fruit farming grew, providing milk and fruit to the growing population in Detroit. The interurban rail line opened in 1899 and took milk to market in Detroit while it also took Rochester and Avon residents to city jobs. Workers commuted by automobile as well. Wealthy Detroiters, notably John Dodge and William Fisher, established country estates in the township. Developers laid out subdivisions for more modest homes. Golf courses and parks provided recreational opportunities for the township's new residents. The big boom in subdivision plats – and land speculation – came in the late 1920s. The slow decline in agricultural production that had begun in 1900 accelerated.

The Depression temporarily halted the suburbanization of Avon Township. World War II brought new industry and new housing for wartime workers. The most important of the new industries was National Twist Drill and Tool Company, which began building a manufacturing plant in Avon in 1940 and soon became the largest employer in the greater Rochester area. After World War II, suburban, commercial, and industrial development steadily replaced Avon Township's farmland. The township's population (still including the village of Rochester) grew from 8,776 in 1940 to 12,500 in 1950 to 15,946 in 1960.

In 1969 Rochester incorporated as a city. Avon Township continued to grow rapidly, its population increasing from 24,413 in 1970 to 40,779 in 1980. In 1980, after a long and bitter fight, the city of Rochester annexed 2.2 square miles from Avon Township. The township incorporated as the City of Rochester Hills in 1984 to protect against future annexation.”

Winkler Mill

The area that is now the *Winkler Mill Historic District* was developed during the earliest days of Avon Township. The 1838-1841 survey of Oakland County by Bela Hubbard already shows this section of Avon Township as “very high broken land” and “light sandy or gravel soil.” Washington and Winkler Mill Roads are shown, and it looks like “Prices Clothing Works” are located in the area of Winkler Mill Pond. The 1857 atlas shows Price and Levi Cole owning this entire area of the township. A planing mill is shown on the creek by Winkler Mill Road.

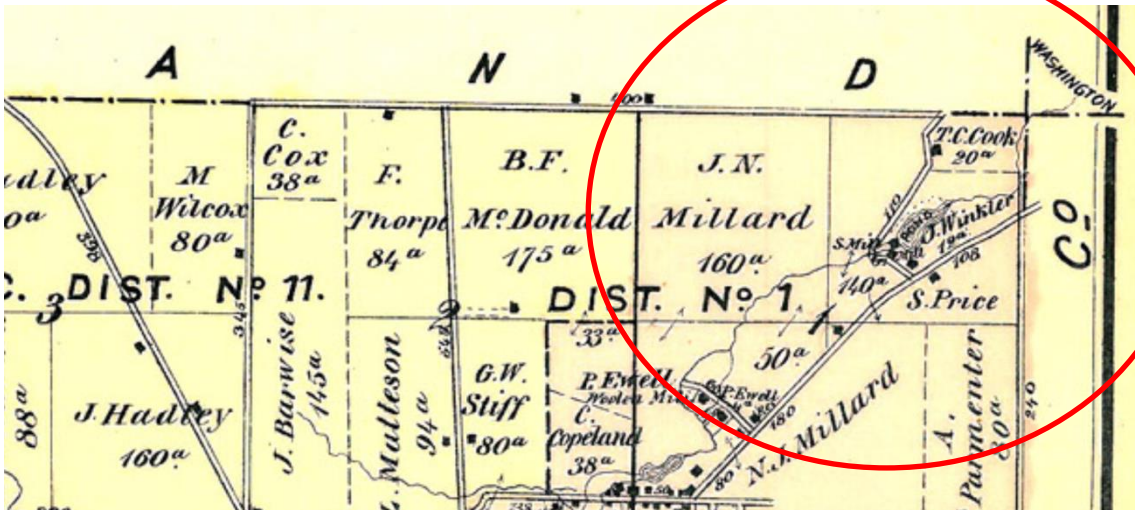


Portion of Avon Township shown in Bela Hubbard's survey of Oakland County, c. 1840.



Portion of Avon Township shown in 1857 Atlas of Oakland County

By 1872 the county atlas shows the Cole farm being owned by T.C. Cook, the entire mill area owned by J. Winkler, and the house now at 1740 Washington Road owned by S. Price.



Portion of Avon Township shown in 1872 Atlas of Oakland County

By the time of the 1896 atlas Mrs. E.J. Galentine owned the majority of the land around Winkler Mill Road and the mill pond with the exception of the twenty acres still owned by S. B. Cook, and the mill area being owned by J. Winkler. This same ownership continues to the 1908 atlas with the exception that the owner is listed as William Galentine, presumably the son of Mrs. E.J. Galentine. Mrs. Galentine was the former Maria L. Price. She married Edwin J. Galentine in 1858.

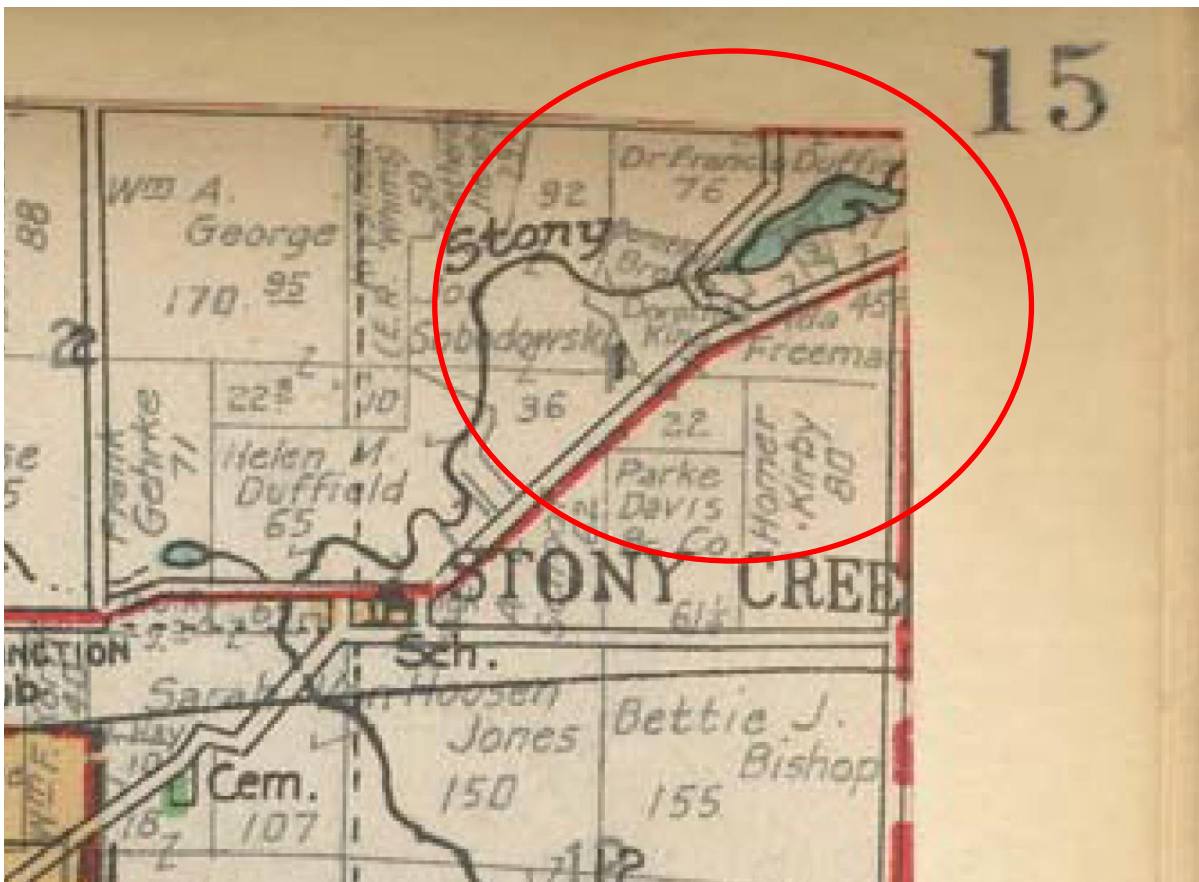


Portion of Avon Township shown in 1896 Atlas of Oakland County

The ownership of the mill corresponds with a March 27, 1914, article in *The Rochester Era* entitled, “Three Old Mills in this Vicinity,” which calls the Winkler Mill at Stony Creek the second oldest mill (behind the Rochester Flouring Mill). “This was built 82 years ago by William Hersey but for the last 42 years has been operated by Joseph Winkler. Mr. Winkler is proud of the fact that he is grinding the old stone flour and using the stones put in the mill 82 years ago.”

Although the Galentine’s owned 135 acres, including what was likely the childhood home of Maria Price on Washington, it does not appear that the family ever lived full time in Avon Township. The 1870 census shows the family living in New York, and at the time of her death in 1903, Maria Galentine lived in St. Louis, presumably with her son William who was an insurance agent.

At some point after the unexpected death of William Galentine in 1908, the land was sold, and by the 1921 atlas Ada Freeman owned the property on both sides of Washington Road on the east bank of the pond, Dr. Francis Duffield owned the land on the west side of the pond straddling both sides of Winkler Mill Road, and Dorothea King owned the property on the south side of Winkler Mill Road across from the pond.



Portion of Avon Township shown in 1921 Atlas of Oakland County

Ms. King was the daughter of Louis Buhl King and grew up in Detroit where her father owned a glasswares store, L.B. King Company. Ms. King married Austrian native Josef

Von Isser, sometime between 1923 and 1926, likely in Europe where she was an art student. According to the 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* the Von Issers built the house at 6400 Winkler Mill Road about 1918. The Von Issers lived in their house on the Winkler Road property until 1942 when they relocated to Tucson, Arizona to live with their son. Mrs. Von Isser passed away in 1946 in Arizona.

Dr. Francis Duffield was a Detroit physician and appears to have purchased the property as a country home. He served on the board of health but appears to have passed away prior to 1928. The property remained in the family, in the 1947 atlas, the east twenty acres is shown belonging to his daughter Frances Duffield and the west portion to his wife, Helen M. Duffield. The 1993-1994 phone directory still lists Frances Duffield at 6081 Winkler Mill Road. Helen M. Duffield is also shown owning additional property on Tienken Road.

In 1921 two unmarried Detroit Northeastern High School teachers, Edith M. Kimball and Virginia M. Jackson purchased a portion of Ada Freeman’s property, and according to Edith Kimball’s great-niece, constructed a house to use as a summer and vacation home.

The 1947 atlas shows how the properties around the pond had been further subdivided into small lots. This shows the growing trend of suburbanization of this area and the construction of houses around the pond instead of its original agricultural use.



Portion of Avon Township shown in 1947 Atlas of Oakland County, W. S. McAlpine, pub.

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."¹ 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 *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District*, as originally designated in 1978 continues to be significant under National Register Criterion A, for its association with a pattern of historical events that has contributed significantly to Rochester Hills history; and under Criterion C, for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and style of architecture and for possessing high artistic value. The areas of significance are agriculture, milling, and architecture. The period of significance is c. 1835, the date of the earliest extant structure until 1945 when the mill building stopped being used as an antique shop and tearoom.

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.

Theme – Agriculture

The entirety of the *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District* represents the theme of Agriculture in the City of Rochester Hills. The history of agriculture is captured on page

¹ 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.

24 of the *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey*, written by Jane Busch in 2002 and quoted below.

“Most of the immigrants to southern Michigan in the 1820s and 1830s came to establish farms. For the first few decades farmers grew crops and raised livestock to provide for the needs of their own families. When the land was first cleared corn was the easiest crop to grow, but when the land became better cultivated wheat was the preferred food crop. In 1850 Oakland County produced 586,346 bushels of wheat. Other crops were corn, oats, rye, beans, peas, potatoes, barley, hay, buckwheat, and fruit. Farm products also included maple sugar, honey, milk, cheese, butter, eggs, beef, pork, and mutton. Among the early Avon Township settlers who developed large and successful farms, probably the most noted was Linus Cone, who purchased eighty acres of land in section 33 in 1826. In 1827 Samuel Durant wrote of Cone: “His experience was remarkable, inasmuch as he cut the first timber and made the first improvements on his farm, and lived long enough upon it to see it made the best regulated and finest improved farm anywhere in his locality.”² Cone wrote articles for the agricultural press, including *Michigan Farmer* and *Genesee Farmer*, and served as president of the Oakland County Agricultural Society.

After the Civil War, Oakland County agriculture became more productive and more commercial. Improvements in farm machinery boosted productivity. Better roads and most importantly railroads made it possible to ship cash crops to urban centers before the food spoiled. Oakland County, one of the first counties in Michigan to be settled and cleared, led the state in farming. Agriculture grew almost steadily between 1850 and 1900. In Avon Township the number of bushels of wheat, corn, grains, and potatoes increased from 107,422 in 1854 to 248,999 in 1884. Wheat and wool were the county’s leading cash crops. Wheat acreage peaked in 1870 and remained high until after 1900. Between 1850 and 1900 Oakland County farmers raised over 100,000 sheep each year. Sheep raising was particularly well suited to the hilly landscape of Avon Township.

Although farming remained the basis of Avon Township’s economy in the early twentieth century, overall farm production began a slow decline in 1900. The decline became more rapid during the land speculation of the 1920s, when suburban subdivisions multiplied. Despite the large commercial farms, the 229 farms in Avon Township in 1929 averaged sixty-five acres in size. After World War II commercial, industrial, and most of all residential development steadily replaced Avon Township’s farmland.”

Theme – Industry - Milling

The entirety of the district, but in particular Winkler Mill Pond and the dams creating the pond, are associated with the history of milling in Avon Township. From pages 41 and

² Samuel W. Durant, *History of Oakland County, Michigan* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1877), 132.

42 of Rochester *Hills Historic Districts Survey*, written by Jane Busch in 2002 and quoted below.

“Sawmills and gristmills were essential to an agricultural economy in the early years of settlement. Sawmills provided boards to build frame houses, and gristmills saved farm families the laborious job of hand grinding their own grain. Fortunately, Avon Township was well supplied with waterpower for mills. In 1824 or 1825 (sources vary) John Hersey, this time with two different partners, built a sawmill and gristmill on Stony Creek, upstream of the settlement and the Miller-Taylor mills, almost in the northeast corner of the township. With their mill buildings these men built dams to create mill ponds and dug mill races to increase the waterpower. Digging a mill race was probably the most labor-intensive part of the ventures in the 1820s.

Wool carding mills, though not as essential as grist and sawmills, were valuable labor savers for farm families. Levi Cole, who in 1825 bought land on Stony Creek not far from Hersey’s mill, had apprenticed as a wool carder and cloth dresser and brought that trade to Avon Township. At first, he may have built a shop on Stony Creek on his own land, but by the mid-1840s tax records show him as owner of a factory building and lot on the north end of Price and Cole’s mill dam. Captain William Price had purchased Hersey’s Stony Creek mills in 1837.

One of the first industries established in the early years of settlement, flouring mills, adapted and prospered by milling wheat for the commercial market. Michigan was part of the wheat belt that later shifted further west. In the 1870s Oakland County had thirty-three flouring mills in operation, reputedly the largest number of any county in Michigan. One of these flouring mills was the mill on Stony Creek that Joseph Winkler had purchased from the heirs of William Price. Winkler built new milling machinery and a very successful business. In 1880 he reportedly ground approximately twenty-five hundred barrels of wheat and nearly seven hundred thousand pounds of cornmeal, buckwheat flour, and livestock feed. He operated the mill for fifty years, selling it in 1920. By then the mill was known more as a survivor and a curiosity. Subsequent owners used it as a tearoom and antique shop. Sadly the 160-year-old mill burned in 1985.”

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Theme – Architecture

All of the buildings in the district are residential or agricultural, with the majority being residential. All but two of the contributing houses in the district are associated with the Greek Revival style of architecture. The style was introduced in the mid-1830s, and the

upright and wing form of the style became the most popular house form in Avon Township. The Levi Cole house at 6081 Winkler Mill Road is an example of the basilica form of Greek Revival, a rare survivor of the style. The Von Isser house at 6400 Winkler Mill Road is an example of the Colonial Revival style. The Kimball and Jackson house at 1921 Washington Road does not have any single architectural style attributes but with its cobblestone foundation, gable front, massive chimney, and clapboard siding, the house has a country house feel. An addition in 1948, and remodeling in the late 1950s and in the 1960s were completed prior to designation.

When the *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District* was designated in 1978 this area was primarily still rural. There were a few newer houses along the pond's edge including the houses at 1775 Washington Road (1952), 1815 Washington Road (1952), 1825 Washington Road (1978), 1835 Washington Road (1977), 1855 Washington Road (1945 – since demolished), 1899 Washington Road (1973 – since demolished), 1921 Washington Road (c. 1920), 1965 Washington Road (1940 – since demolished, new house c. 2005), and located on the west side of the mill pond: 6255 Winkler Mill Road (1966), and 6271 Winkler Mill Road (1940). Although a couple of these properties were constructed within the period of significance, they do not contribute to the history of the district as they are later residential development and are not part of the agricultural, milling, or architectural significance of the district.

The house at 1820 Carter Road was a barn for 1740 Washington Road at the time of designation. It was converted to a residence in 1979 and later changes were made to the property, by 2002 it was so altered it was considered non-contributing.

South and east of the intersection of Winkler Mill and Washington Roads there were houses at 1610 Washington Road (1964), 1650 Washington Road (1968), and 1700 Washington Road (1968).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the properties in the district were subdivided further and six more houses were added on the southeast bank of the mill pond, 1965 Washington Road (1985), 1957 Washington Road (1989), 1939 Washington Road (1996), 1877 Washington Road (2012), 1805 Washington Road (1981), 1725 Washington Road (1983). Five houses were added on Washington Road south of Winkler Mill Road, 1720 Washington Road (1995), 1701 Washington Road (1988), 1651 Washington Road (1988), and 1590 Washington Road (2022 – rebuilt).

The survey in 2002 determined that three properties originally considered contributing to the district had been altered and no longer retained historic integrity to be contributing to the district. These were 1921 Washington, 1820 Carter, and 6250 Winkler Mill Road. 6250 Winkler Mill Road is a log cabin that was constructed in Elmira, Ontario Canada and moved to this location in 1986. The wings were added around 1999. Because it was moved to the district outside of the period of significance and has no relation to the history or architecture of the district it is considered non-contributing.

The HDSC received additional information on the history of 1921 Washington and has determined that the house still contributes to the district and has deemed it a contributing property.

Representative photographs of non-contributing houses are at the back of the report, survey forms with photographs were included in the survey leading up to this report.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The *Winkler Mill Pond Historic District*, has tremendous historical significance to the city of Rochester Hills. The district embodies the early farming and milling history centered around the Winkler Mill Pond in this portion of the city. The Greek Revival and Colonial Revival residences and early agricultural outbuildings along with the rural setting, including Winkler Mill and Washington Roads, tell the story of the district. The Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee recommends that the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District boundaries not be changed and three resources in the district be changed to contributing: Washington Road, Winkler Mill Road, and 1921 Washington Road.

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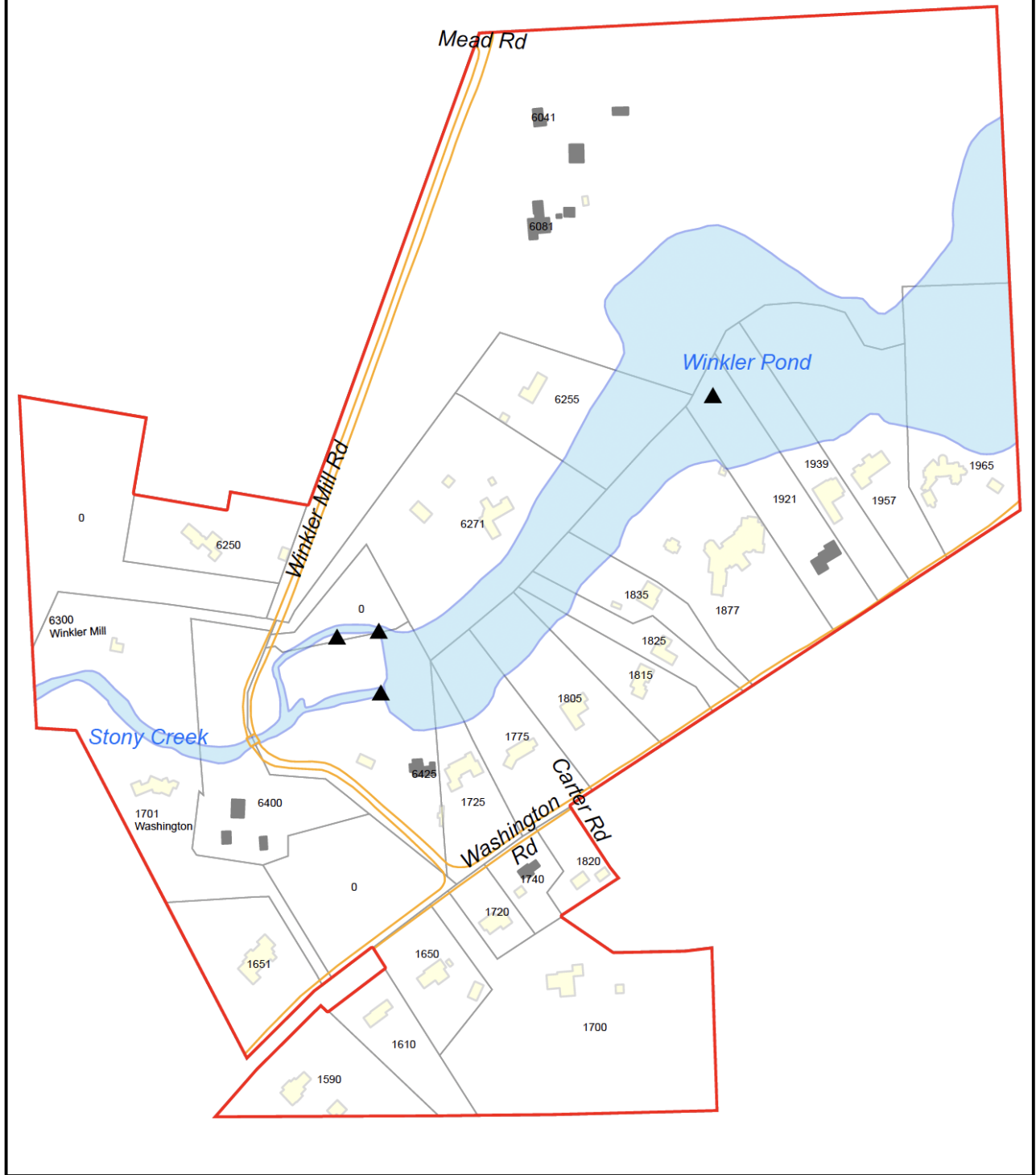
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Proposed Winkler Mill Historic District



- Winkler Mill Historic District
- Historic Contributing Building
No
- Yes
- Tax Parcel
- Historic District Contributing Structures



1 inch = 350 feet
 0 175 350 700 Feet

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 Name: ProposedWinklerMillHistoricDistrict / Published by MIS Dept. 10/03/2023

STREETSCAPE PHOTOS, all taken September 2020



Photo 1 Looking east on Winkler Mill Road to the intersection with Washington Road



Photo 2 Looking north on Washington Road from near Winkler Mill Road



Photo 3 Looking south on Washington Road from near Winkler Mill Road



Photo 4 Looking south on Washington Road near Carter Road



Photo 5 Looking north on Winkler Mill Road near 6250 Winkler Mill Road

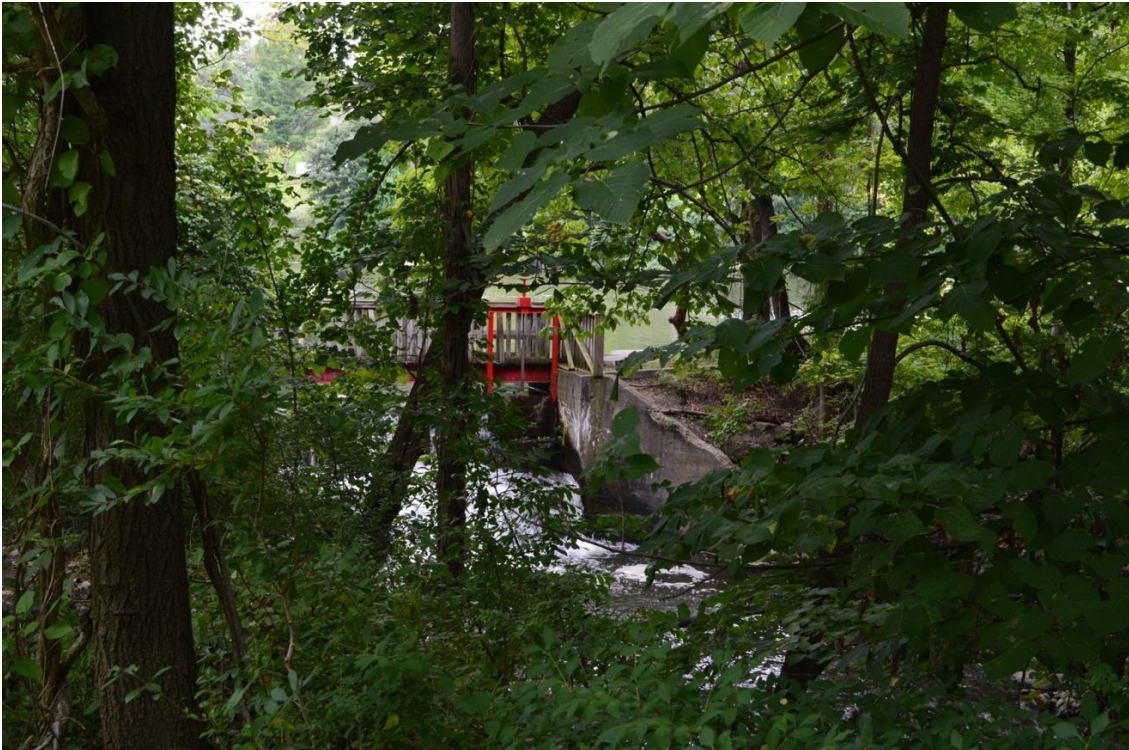


Photo 6 Looking north at dam with mill pond beyond



1820 Carter, barn converted to a house, non-contributing



6250 Winkler Mill Road, moved to site in 1986, non-contributing, Assessor photo, unknown date



1650 Washington Road, 1964, non-contributing



1651 Washington Road, 1988, non-contributing, Assessor photo, unknown date



1775 Washington Road, 1952, non-contributing, Assessor photo, unknown date



1965 Washington Road, c. 2005, non-contributing, Assessor photo, unknown date