

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Great Lakes Manor

Other names/site number: Kirby Manor Apartments

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 457 East Kirby Street

City or town: Detroit State: MI County: Wayne

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>MI SHPO</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>Title :</p>	<p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Great Lakes Manor is located on the northwest corner of East Kirby and Beaubien Streets, three blocks east of Woodward and about three miles north of downtown Detroit in what is known as the University-Cultural Center (UCC). The UCC was the subject of a two-part Multiple Resource Area (MRA) thematic nomination in the mid-1980s that resulted in several properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The UCC, as described in the MRA, is roughly bounded by the Grand Trunk Railway railroad tracks at the north, I-75 (Chrysler Freeway) to the east, roughly to East Warren Street on the south, and MI-10 (John C. Lodge Freeway) to the west. The UCC links Detroit's downtown with the New Center business district to the north and contains Wayne State University and many of the city's premier cultural institutions as well as significant commercial and residential buildings.

The four-and-a-half-story Great Lakes Manor faces south toward Kirby Street and Peck Park. The Classical Revival style building has a raised basement, a flat roof, and is clad in multi-tone brownish-red brick on the two street facing facades, and common brick on the other two elevations. The building's footprint reaches nearly to the lot lines and is a variation on the typical rectangular plan and has two rectangular bays at the front of the building and there are

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two cut out lightwells on the east elevation. The building's south entrance is marked by a stone portico consisting of a broken pediment supported by Doric columns. There is a very shallow grass lawn and foundation plantings between the front of the building and the Kirby Street sidewalk. The east elevation abuts the Beaubien Street sidewalk, the north side of the building abuts a public alley. There is a concrete walkway separating the west side of the building and the neighboring house.

Narrative Description

Setting

Great Lakes Manor is located on the east edge of Detroit's University-Cultural Center (UCC), the home to the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Museum of African American History, the Michigan Science Center, the Detroit Historical Museum, the Detroit Public Library, College for Creative Studies, and Wayne State University. The UCC was the subject of a two-part Multiple Resource Area (MRA) thematic nomination in the mid-1980s that resulted in several properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The UCC, as described in the MRA, is roughly bounded by the Grand Trunk Railway railroad tracks at the north, I-75 (Chrysler Freeway) to the east, roughly to East Warren Street on the south, and MI-10 (John C. Lodge Freeway) to the west. The UCC links Detroit's downtown with the New Center business district to the north and contains Wayne State University and many of the city's premier cultural institutions as well as significant commercial and residential buildings.

Great Lakes Manor is situated directly south of the National Register-listed East Ferry Avenue Historic District. The area has streets arranged in a grid except where institutions have closed streets. The larger neighborhood has a mix of institutional buildings, tall apartment buildings, and multi- and single-family houses constructed between the late 1800s and the 2000s. The immediate block has single- and multi-family houses constructed in the early 1900s, and Peck Park fronts the south side of Kirby Street for the entire block. The neighborhood has asphalt paved streets separated from concrete sidewalks with grass tree lawns planted with a mix of older and newer trees.

This area of Detroit was one of the second group of areas of the city open to African Americans who were originally restricted to "a relatively small geographic area on the lower east side of the city in the areas along St. Antoine and Hastings Streets" prior to 1900 (Mills, *Twentieth Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976*, p. E-5). With the first waves of African Americans arriving in Detroit during the Great Migration, along with Eastern European Jewish immigrants, the amount of housing in that area was inadequate. Initially Jewish residents, quickly followed by African Americans, moved northward into this area of Detroit in the 1910s and 1920s. There are a number of notable sites associated with Detroit's African American history within three-blocks of Kirby Manor Apartments, including the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs, Dunbar Hospital, and the Lewis College of Business.

Exterior

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The façade is comprised of the recessed central section and projecting rectangular bays on both sides. A soldier course of bricks runs across the entire wall at the basement window lintel line, a limestone band sits on top of the soldier course marking the top of the basement level. Another limestone band runs across the wall at the fourth-floor windowsill line. A projecting header course runs across the wall just above the fourth-floor window lintels. All of the window openings have limestone sills and splayed soldier course lintels except for the basement openings.

The front entrance is in the center of the wall and is accessed by three limestone steps leading to a shallow porch covered with a broken curved pediment supported by Doric columns all executed in limestone. There is a single non-original door and boarded transom. A narrow six-over-one aluminum window is located on both sides of the entrance at the first floor and basement levels. Above the entrance there are two window openings at the second through fourth floors. Each opening contains two six-over-one aluminum windows. Just below the parapet there is a wide masonry band below a brick soldier course. A carved stone panel is centered in the parapet wall which has limestone coping.

The projecting rectangular bays on both sides of the center section are identical. A single window opening is centered on the wall at each floor. Each opening contains three six-over-one aluminum windows. The basement windows are shorter than the upper floors. At the corners of the bays brick piers extend above the parapet wall.

The east elevation is comprised of six sections, the side of the front bays and three large projecting bays separated by two recessed sections. The façade decoration continues around this side and includes the soldier course of bricks running across the entire wall at the basement window lintel line, a limestone band sits on top of the soldier course marking the top of the basement level. Another limestone band runs across the wall at the fourth-floor windowsill line. A projecting header course runs across the wall just above the fourth-floor window lintels. A flat masonry band, where there was originally a cornice, runs across the wall just below a soldier course at the base of the parapet wall. Carved stone panels are centered in the parapet of the three projecting sections. All of the window openings have limestone sills and splayed soldier course lintels except for the basement openings.

Starting at the south end of the building the sides of the front bays are recessed from the main wall. There is one window opening in the center of the wall at each floor. Each opening contains one six-over-one aluminum window and a mechanical vent.

Moving north the next section has three window openings in each floor that contain a one six-over-one aluminum window, except at the basement level where there are two windows in the outer two openings. The center openings are shorter. At the first floor the three openings are set into blind brick arches with a soldier course and limestone keystone outlining the top of the arch.

Moving north the first recessed section of wall has four window openings at each floor and each opening contains a single six-over-one aluminum window. At the first floor the two center

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openings are each within a blind brick arch with soldier course top and limestone keystone. One set of windows is shorter than the others. Modern mechanical vents are located between one bay of windows.

The center projecting section has two window openings at each floor, the basement openings are shorter and narrower and contain one six-over-one window per opening. The first through fourth floor openings each contain three six-over-one windows. A stone panel is centered on the parapet wall.

The wall of the northern recessed section is the opposite hand of the southern section, the shorter bay of windows and mechanical vents are in the opposite location. The basement level contains a door that is below grade. A concrete block wall runs adjacent to the sidewalk in front of the area that is below grade which is accessed by a set of stairs and a ramp.

The northern projected section of the building duplicates the southern projection with three window openings at each floor. The basement openings each contain two windows and the openings are separated by aluminum covered mullions. In the upper floors the center openings are shorter. At the first floor the three openings are set into blind brick arches with a soldier course and limestone keystone outlining the top of the arch.

The building's west elevation is comprised of the west side of the front projecting bay which is recessed from the remainder of the flat main wall and contains a window opening in the center of the wall at each floor that each have a six-over-one window and mechanical vent. The soldier course and limestone band between the basement and first floor, the limestone band at the fourth floor window sill line, the projecting header course above the fourth floor window lintels, and flat masonry band at the base of the parapet wall continue from the façade around the first bay of the west elevation. The remainder of the wall is clad in common brick. The first bay of the main wall has brick matching the façade and contains two window openings at each floor with a six-over-one aluminum window in each. The remainder of the west elevation has window openings containing one or two six-over-one aluminum windows spaced rhythmically across the wall at every floor. Some bays have shorter windows. Mechanical vents are interspersed with the windows. One bay of windows at the stairway toward the southern end of the building are offset vertically. A flush metal door is located at ground level of the stairway.

The rear elevation is clad in common brick and is divided into two halves with the east half projecting further north than the west half. The east half has a sign painted on to the brick at the east edge of the wall reading "Great Lakes Mutual Life Insurance Co." at the first floor. At the west side of the east half there is a window opening at each floor containing two six-over-one windows. The west half of the rear elevation has a chimney at the intersection of the two halves next to a bay of single window openings each containing a six-over-one aluminum window. The windows are in the rear stair and are offset vertically. There is a flush metal door at ground level.

Interior

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The front door opens to a restrained entry vestibule – unlike other apartment buildings of this era, this building never had a grand lobby space. The entry vestibule leads directly to a steep stairway with a decorative plaster ceiling. At the top of the stair there is a short east-west running corridor with an arched decorative plaster ceiling and a restored black and white checkered tile floor that has always served as the building's lobby.

The main corridor on each floor runs north and south, with apartments on both sides. The corridors have carpeted floors, painted gypsum board walls, and suspended tile ceilings. Stairs are located near the south end of the building and at the north end of the corridor. The stairs are in their original configuration and have the original wood handrails, plaster walls, and ceilings. Though secondary to the main stairs, these reflect the main entry in their lack of ornamentation.

The apartment units have one or two bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms. They have vinyl floors, painted gypsum board walls, and painted gypsum board ceilings.

Integrity

The building possesses historic integrity under Criterion A, as required under the Multiple Property Document Form (MPDF) *Apartment Buildings in Detroit, 1892 – 1970*, and the draft MPDF, *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976*. The overall appearance of the exterior of the building is intact with the exception of the windows which have been replaced at least twice, the current windows are aluminum clad wood windows in a six-over-one pattern, similar to the original configuration. The masonry band around the top of the building originally contained a cornice which has been missing since before 1976. The interior of the building retains the original plaster ceilings and restored tile floors in the common entrance vestibule and lobby corridor, as well as the original wood railings in the stairways which are in their original locations and configurations, one at the rear of the north-south running central corridor and one near the south end. It should be noted that the building never had a grand lobby space or elaborately detailed corridors, as may be present in other apartment buildings constructed in the same era.

The building meets the registration requirements found on pages F 9-10 of *Apartment Buildings in Detroit, 1892-1970*, for Low-Rise Apartment Houses including having over six self-contained apartment units on four floors; the characteristic 1920s courtyard form and Classical Revival style; a single public entry door at the front of the building, and three secondary entrances – one at each staircase, and one on the side leading to the basement level; oral history indicates that there may have been a grocery or other small retail space in the basement level of the building but there is no storefront, just the side entrance that leads to the basement level; a public vestibule behind the front door with a public lobby in the form of a corridor, and shared circulation at the stairways, corridors, and elevator; and sufficient characteristics to identify the building as a low-rise apartment house in the courtyard form and Classical Revival style. The exterior brick walls with stone trim and broken pediment around the front entrance are illustrative of the type and style. On the interior the original configuration including the public entrance vestibule and stair, cross corridor lobby, main double-loaded corridor, and two exit

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stairs all remain. The apartment units are generally in their original locations, and the unit entrances are spaced rhythmically along the corridors as they were originally.

Furthermore, as noted in Section F, page 1 of the draft *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976*, with regard to historic integrity:

when evaluating Detroit's African American 20th Century Civil Rights resources, considerations such as the effect of discriminatory federal, state, and local policies; disparity in mortgage and lending programs; and unfair housing practices must be taken into account. During the period of significance, African Americans found it difficult to undertake new construction and instead adapted existing buildings for a new use. The activities and associations of the civil rights movement will generally be more important than a building's architectural or design integrity. In addition, unfair employment practices contributed to economic hardship in the African American community that often made upkeep and maintenance of properties difficult. It is expected that common alterations, such as replacement windows and doors and the removal of or damage to architectural and ornamental elements, will not automatically disqualify a property for listing if the essential spaces and characteristics related to its civil rights significance remain intact. Any alterations, interior or exterior, must be evaluated within the context of the building's overall ability to convey the association and feeling related to its significance within the historic contexts established in Section E before deeming the building eligible or not due to material or design changes.

Furthermore, on page F-12 it states:

Special consideration should be given to understanding the ongoing impacts of segregation and discrimination when evaluating the integrity of buildings. Alterations that happened both during and after the period of significance reflect strategies necessary for survival under these circumstances. Historically African American properties were also highly susceptible to charges of blight and were disproportionately targeted for demolition of buildings.

Great Lakes Manor retains its overall ability to convey its role as an apartment building owned by an African American-owned company that sought to address discriminatory housing practices in the city of Detroit by providing apartments to African Americans. The Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company sign on the rear of the building is in a prominent location as it is easily visible for people traveling on Beaubien Street.

The building was rehabilitated in 1989 under the City of Detroit's affordable housing programs. During the 1989 rehabilitation the windows were replaced, and the building was reduced from forty-two efficiency units to thirty, one- and two-bedroom units.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Social History

Period of Significance

1934-1948

Significant Dates

1925

1934

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pelavin Brothers, builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Great Lakes Manor is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A at the local level of significance for its role in providing housing to African Americans in an era of blatant housing discrimination in the city of Detroit.

The building was constructed in 1925 and first served Detroit's Jewish population. The building was owned by Michigan's largest African American owned business in the 1950s, Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company. The building was available to African Americans for residences in the second half of the 1930s when housing discrimination was still in place in the city.

Although the building was constructed in 1923, the building derives its significance from its association with the patterns of segregation and integration in housing. Therefore, the period of significance begins in 1934 when the building was purchased by the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company and ends in 1948 following the United States Supreme Court rulings in *Shelley v. Kraemer* and *Hurd v. Hodge*, which prohibited state and federal courts from enforcing racial restrictive covenants and which ostensibly provided African Americans the freedom to live where they so desired.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Detroit's University-Cultural Center Neighborhood

The Great Lakes Manor (Kirby Manor Apartments) apartment building is located in the University-Cultural Center neighborhood of Detroit. This area of Detroit was originally part of the L. Beaubien Farm, of the family of early French settlers in Detroit. The third block east of Woodward Avenue of Frederick, Kirby, and Ferry Streets was platted by Dexter M. Ferry, the owner of the Ferry Seed Company, in 1892. The pattern of development of the area followed the typical pattern in this area of the Woodward corridor, beginning in the late 1800s with wealthy Detroiters constructing large homes on large lots facing Woodward Avenue. In 1886 Dexter M. Ferry platted Ferry Avenue, one block to the north, between Woodward Avenue and Brush Street with large lot sizes and building restrictions, meant for wealthy homeowners. The blocks east of Brush Street were platted and developed slightly later and contained more modest houses and multi-family dwellings on smaller lots constructed in the 1910s and 1920s.

Between 1880 and 1914 more than two million Jews came to the United States. During that time, the city's Jewish population increased from about one thousand to about thirty-five thousand. Beginning in the 1910s the UCC area was primarily inhabited by Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Three synagogues and a Hebrew school were located in the surrounding neighborhood. One synagogue building and the school remain. During the late 1920s and 1930s the area transitioned to an African American neighborhood as Jews became more affluent and

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moved to the developing areas in the north and west sections of Detroit and adjacent suburbs. Jewish owners, who faced restrictions themselves, were more willing to rent or sell to African Americans who were moving into the area from Paradise Valley and Black Bottom located just to the south which were becoming overcrowded. Because of the deed restrictions faced by Jews the properties they constructed generally did not have restrictions preventing sale to African Americans. This shift in population is partially reflected in the neighborhood by the 1929 sale of the Hebrew school to the Scott Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, an African American congregation. In the 1930s the synagogue became a Baptist church.

The African Americans moving to the neighborhood were prominent Detroit citizens. They were doctors, lawyers, and educators who created and built health institutions, businesses, clubs, and educational facilities for use by blacks. Several of these institutions were located on Ferry Street, immediately north of Kirby Manor. They included the Fairview Sanitarium, owned by Dr. Robert Greenidge, Detroit's first black cardiologist and the doctor for Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company. He was also one of the founders of Detroit's first black hospital, Dunbar Hospital, located one block to the south on Frederick Street. Other black institutions on East Ferry Street included the Household Art Employment Agency; Bertha Hansbury and Mrs. Johnson's Music Foundation; Lewis Business School; the Slade-Gragg Academy of Practical Arts; and the Detroit Association of Colored Women's Clubs.¹

Housing Segregation in Detroit

According to the Proposed Ossian Sweet House Historic District final report, prepared by the City of Detroit:

In 1850 there were only 2,583 African Americans living in the state of Michigan, with only 587 or 23.7 percent living in Detroit. Thirty years later, in 1880, that number had only modestly increased statewide to 2,821, with most of the newcomers settling in Detroit. Detroit's relatively tiny black population clustered along the Detroit riverfront south of Jefferson Avenue and east of Woodward Avenue. By the early 1900s black families began to move eastward and northward toward Gratiot Avenue in the area originally known as the St. Antoine Street District. This neighborhood was home to many of the city's Italian, Greek, and Russian Jewish residents, and was referred to as the port of entry for many of Detroit's foreign-born immigrants.²

During World War I, United States immigration policies curtailed the number of foreign immigrants, which created a labor shortage in Detroit that was exacerbated by the number of men who served in the military during the war. Manufacturers advertised high-paying jobs in a number of southern states, primarily in rural areas. The movement of the hundreds of thousands of people moving from the southern to the northern United States in what is now called the

¹ City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board. *East Ferry Historic District Final Report*, 1981, pp. 3-4.

² City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board. *Proposed Ossian Sweet House Historic District Final Report*, 2005.

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“Great Migration.” The majority of those moving northward were African Americans, drawn to higher paying industrial jobs in northern cities including Chicago and Detroit.

Despite the obvious need for labor and notwithstanding the recruitment of African Americans to the city, black citizens were largely confined to one area of the city, roughly bounded by Leland Street on the north, Hastings Street on the east, Macomb Street on the south, and Brush Street on the west, in an area described by a 1926 report by the City of Detroit as the St. Antoine Street District, so named for the street that bisected the district. Until about 1915 this was sole African American neighborhood in the city.³

The Proposed Ossian Sweet Historic District report further noted that:

Fueled by the vast outpouring of southern arrivals, Detroit’s black population exploded after 1910 and by 1925, the number of blacks in the city rising from 5,741 to 40,838, an increase of 611.3 percent. It was this great migration which laid the foundation for the development of large black populations in many northern American cities.

By 1920, Detroit had become the fastest growing city in the country, ranked the fourth largest city in America. This was due in part to the role Detroit played in America’s automobile revolution. By the mid-1920s Detroit was home to three thousand manufacturing plants, thirty-seven automobile manufacturing plants and two hundred and fifty automobile accessory manufacturing plants. Like the majority of Detroit newcomers, blacks migrated to the city in search of jobs and opportunity. But compared to other immigrants to the city, the treatment of newly arrived blacks was far worse. Jobs were restricted and housing was limited.

The rapid growth of Detroit’s black population gave rise to many new social problems, with housing being the greatest challenge. Unfortunately, housing demand did not keep up with Detroit’s growing population. By the late 1920s the term Black Bottom, which originally referred to rich soil, was now used in reference to the southernmost blocks of a district consisting of a three-square mile portion of the eastside which had become home to 313,600 of Detroit’s African American people. This overwhelming Southern influx of migrants to Detroit resulted in the movement of blacks out of the eastside ghetto and into other areas of the city, including Tireman Avenue, West Eight Mile Road and Conant Gardens. Faced with a critical shortage of housing in the African American community, Detroit found itself entrenched in the social and political issues which had become a problem in mainstream America. As the black population continued to grow, the reaction of many in the white community was of heightened racial hostility. This manifested itself in a hardening of patterns of social and residential segregation, and occasional outbreaks of racial violence. In the early twentieth

³ “The Negro in Detroit.” Prepared for the Mayor’s Inter-racial Committee by the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., 1926, vol. II, pp. 10-14.

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century whites began to form organizations determined to prevent blacks from integrating all-white neighborhoods. They used restrictive covenants, home improvement associations and real state codes to prevent most blacks from finding decent housing anywhere in the city.

Restrictive covenants first appeared in the late nineteenth century and spread throughout the United States well into the twentieth. Restrictive terms were often included in the sale of property or attached to the original deeds by developers. These covenants precluded the sale, rent, or lease of property to a member of a specified minority group or groups, and were often and particularly focused on African Americans. The sentiment behind these instruments of discrimination were based in race prejudice, "and not very well established in reason."⁴

Writing in 1934, Albert T. Martin, then associate professor of law at Ohio State University, provided a rather pointedly introduction to his analysis of segregation, stating, "most white people do not want Negroes for neighbors."⁵ He later observed, "white landowners do not consider whether a prospective Negro neighbor would be less annoying than most white neighbors," and proposed that "they will be more vociferous than logical in attempting to justify their attitude."⁶

The legality of these covenants, and by extension the validation of this prejudice, was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1926, and remained so until restrictive racial covenants were struck down in 1948 when the court ruled that "enforcement of such covenants by state courts constitutes state action prohibited by the Fourteenth Amendment."⁷

In addition to legal means, black families were often met with hostile, physical resistance when they moved into white neighborhoods. The most prominent of these incidents was that of Ossian H. and Gladys Sweet in September 1925. This was not, however, the only time that African American homeowners were threatened by whites. In July 1925 the *Detroit Free Press* reported several recent instances of sustained threats to black homeowners and their property to the extent that the Detroit police department held both a "full complements of reserves" and an armored car "in readiness in case of trouble."⁸

Detroit Mayor John W. Smith wrote that the incidents were the result of a "determined campaign" by the Ku Klux Klan to "set race against race, creed against creed, and group against group" by "going from house to house conducting a cowardly campaign... and have whispered their criminal propaganda" to white and black citizens alike.⁹

⁴ Arthur T. Martin "Segregation of Residences of Negroes." *Michigan Law Review* 32, no. 6 (1934): 721-42. doi:10.2307/1281531.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ B. T. McGaw and George B. Nesbitt. "Aftermath of Shelley versus Kraemer on Residential Restriction by Race." *Land Economics* 29, no. 3 (1953): 280-87. doi:10.2307/3144835.

⁸ "Stop Rioting, Smith Pleads with Citizens." *Detroit Free Press*. July 12, 1925.

⁹ "Smith Blames Klan Politics for Race Rows." *Detroit Free Press*. September 13, 1925.

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At the same time, restrictive covenants remained legal, and in the 1930s the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) engaged local real estate professionals to assess communities throughout the country in terms of credit-worthiness, thus making available mortgages for the purchase of property in certain neighborhoods, but limiting or preventing lending in others. These neighborhoods were color coded, with the supposedly riskiest neighborhoods delineated in red, thus the term "redlining." In practice, the HOLC maps institutionalized and solidified racist lending practices, and further entrenched de facto segregation in cities across the United States that is still felt to this day. For whites, the HOLC and the Federal Housing Administration together provided lower interest rates, lower down payments, and insurance against mortgage defaults, which made obtaining and owning a home much easier. African Americans, however, were largely excluded "from most legitimate means of obtaining a mortgage."¹⁰

The unavailability of "legitimate" mortgages provided an entrée for other forms of lending that were, in many cases, offered by unscrupulous providers. In one form, sales of homes, when they were available, were made through land contracts, a form of lending still present and that has been described as "a predatory agreement that combined all the responsibilities of homeownership with all the disadvantages of renting—while offering the benefits of neither."¹¹ Indeed, purveyors of such instruments "would sell homes at inflated prices and then evict families who could not pay—taking their down payment and their monthly installments as profit. Then they'd bring in another black family, rinse, and repeat."¹²

While it was true that the "northern white [was] as reluctant as his southern brother to live in close proximity to the Negro,"¹³ it was also true that some of these same whites had no misgivings in regard to taking money from African Americans.

It was against this backdrop that organizations were established by African Americans for African Americans that provided housing options that helped prospective homeowners and renters alike avoid predatory lenders.

The Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company

Despite significant discrimination faced by African Americans, and both formal and informal limits to where they could live, worship, shop, and work, the number and wealth of African Americans in Detroit increased. Gains in wealth facilitated the creation of neighborhoods and institutions that served and improved life in their community. African Americans created their own newspapers, sports teams, religious congregations, stores, and entertainment venues. These organizations, in turn, provided economic and social opportunities for others that may have been otherwise denied.

¹⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates. "The Case for Reparations." *Atlantic*. June 2014.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Arthur T. Martin "Segregation of Residences of Negroes." *Michigan Law Review* 32, no. 6 (1934): 721-42. doi:10.2307/1281531.

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The creation of separate institutions was not unique to Detroit. Rather, this was the nationwide trend at the time. An April 4, 1956, article in the *Michigan Chronicle* reported that “in many places where Negroes had lived, they were accustomed to doing business with companies owned and controlled by their own people. As late as 1920 there was nothing like this to be found in these parts.”¹⁴

In 1921 the Liberty Life Insurance Company of Illinois began doing business in Michigan and sold ordinary insurance to Detroit’s African Americans. In 1922 National Benefit Life Insurance Company of Washington D.C. was authorized to do business in Michigan but did not open an office until 1924 to sell ordinary, industrial, accident, and health insurance.

By 1925 the local population was large enough to provide a client base for locally owned insurance companies. That same year the first to open was the Victory Mutual Accident and Health Association of Michigan. The organization lasted two years.

Cognizant of the need in the African American community, in 1927 prominent Detroit African American attorney Colbert Sobrian led the effort to create a new insurance company in Michigan. The group of prominent African Americans raised ten thousand dollars for capital and approval of the Michigan Insurance Department. On March 1, 1928, the Great Lakes Mutual Benefit Association of Michigan opened in a small office at 484 Beacon Street (demolished) to sell life insurance policies in one hundred-dollar increments with a maximum policy of five hundred dollars. The company had two hundred and fifty initial policy holders that paid between five and twenty-five dollars per week for their policies. The company’s first executive committee was comprised by some of Detroit’s most prominent African American citizens. The president was Charles H. Mahoney, a leading attorney and later, the first African American appointed as full delegate to the United Nations. The secretary was Moses L. Walker, president of the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP and chairman of the Ossian Sweet Case Defense Fund. Colbert Sobrian was the manager and Michael Parks was the treasurer. Other directors included Dr. Robert Greenidge, founder of Parkside Hospital, Fairview Sanatorium, Victory Loan and Investment Company, and Eastside Medical Laboratory; William Osby, chief engineer of the Madison-Lenox Hotel and founder of the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP; Julian Holder a property manager; Henry W. Holcomb a musician; P. Bryant; Albert E. Kinney, an inspector with the Pullman Company; Everett Watson a realtor; and John Roxborough, manager of boxing legend Joe Louis. In April 1928 Agnes Bristol a Detroit Public School teacher and Louis Blount, president of the National Negro Insurance Association and vice-president of the National Negro Business League joined the board. The company grew so rapidly that by the end of 1928 the offices were moved to 471 Gratiot Avenue (demolished).

In 1929 the company name was changed to Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company and Colbert Sobrian left the organization. To survive the stock market crash in 1929 and subsequent Great Depression the company officers used their personal funds to meet company expenses and pay any claims.¹⁵ In 1934 the company joined the National Negro Insurance Association. The

¹⁴ “Insurance Business Stabilized Negro Community During Past 20 Years,” *Michigan Chronicle*. April 4, 1956.

¹⁵ “Great Lakes,” *Ebony*. March 1956.

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company continued to be very active in the National Negro Insurance Association, Louis Blount served as president of the association for many years and delegations from the company regularly attended the association annual meetings held all over the United States.

Despite the economic challenges of the early 1930s the company remained stable and continued to prosper. In 1934 the company moved into a new headquarters building at 301 East Warren Avenue (demolished). When the company moved into this building, the *Detroit Tribune* reported that it was acclaimed “as another achievement of Negro business in Michigan.”¹⁶ By the time of the company’s tenth anniversary in 1938 it held seven million dollars in active policies, had branch offices in several Michigan cities, and employed ninety-four people. The company’s group of visiting nurses was one of the few African American insurance companies that offered this service free of charge to its policy holders.



Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company home office, 301 East Warren Avenue, Detroit. *Detroit Tribune*, July 11, 1936. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress.

In 1939 the company opened a branch office in Flint as well as a branch in Detroit’s Brewster housing project. In 1944 the company posted 200,000 dollars with the State of Michigan Insurance Department in order to expand its life insurance offerings to twenty-one different types with no limit. In 1945 the company was renamed the Great Lakes Mutual Life Insurance Company and moved to a new headquarters building at 82 East Hancock Avenue (demolished).

By early 1950 the company was Michigan’s largest African American business, and the third largest African American insurance company outside of the southern United States with thirty-

¹⁶ “A Credit to the Race.” *Tribune Independent*. September 8, 1934.

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three million dollars of insurance in force and ninety-thousand policy holders at the end of 1949. The company had 170 agents and had experienced two years of twenty-five percent growth and had three branch offices in Detroit as well as offices in Ecorse, Flint, Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Benton Harbor, and in the northern Ohio cities of Toledo and Cleveland.

The growth of the company continued through the 1950s and the company was featured in two national magazines, *Color* and *Ebony* in early 1956. The company was still Michigan's largest African American-owned business and held fifty-two million dollars in policies with 106,000 customers. The company had over three hundred employees throughout its ten branches. It recruited from America's leading colleges and universities with an intensive training program for its employees. In 1962 the company constructed a new office building for its headquarters at 8401 Woodward Avenue (extant). At that time the company had employee basketball and bowling teams, a choir, and its own federal credit union, Great Lakes Federal Credit Union. In late 1969, with 12.7 million dollars of assets and 84 million dollars of insurance, the company merged with the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company of Durham, North Carolina, to create the first African American-operated company with assets exceeding one hundred million dollars.

While Great Lakes was not Detroit's only African American owned insurance company it was the largest and had developed into what is likely the most significant of these organizations. Other companies included The Supreme Temple founded in 1933, which became Superior Life Insurance Company in 1941. In 1956 Superior Life had nine million dollars' in insurance. Two other companies, Western Union Mutual, which started in 1937, and Penny Mutual, were eventually taken over by Great Lakes. In 1956 another company, Wright's Mutual Insurance, held six million dollars in policies, and the Detroit Metropolitan Mutual Assurance Company of Michigan, founded in 1941, held twenty-seven million dollars' in policies. There were also three insurance agencies owned and operated by African Americans, W. J. Fields; Walton Lewis Agency; and R.G. Schuster Agency.

Great Lakes Mutual Insurance did more than sell life insurance policies. Despite growing numbers and wealth, African Americans were actively discriminated against and could not easily obtain loans to purchase property or start businesses. The officers and directors of Great Lakes recognized this and created two subsidiary companies with the same officers and board, the Great Lakes Agency and the Great Lakes Land and Investment Company. It is unclear exactly when these subsidiary companies were founded but it appears to have been sometime between 1929 and 1934. Either through the subsidiary companies or through the insurance company itself, Great Lakes offered real estate mortgages with great success. This was an original aim of the company, to provide loans to African American homeowners and entrepreneurs. A January 23, 1949, article in the *Detroit Tribune* entitled, "Great Lakes Investments Total Quarter Million," indicated that real estate mortgage loans totaled 162,121 dollars in the previous year and that the company had invested over a quarter million dollars in the African American community since 1938. The company boasted that there had been only one foreclosure in the ten years of lending.

The Great Lakes Land and Investment Company

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The Great Lakes Land and Investment Company (GLLIC), which was established as a subsidiary of the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company, acquired the Kirby Manor Apartments in 1936 and renamed the building Great Lakes Manor by 1937.

The company appears to have acquired other investment properties over the years as ten different buildings are pictured in the Great Lakes twenty-fifth anniversary book, but there are no addresses listed or identifying information about them. It is possible that these were simply mortgages and not actually owned by the company. Of the ten buildings pictured, four buildings appear to be single family houses and the other six are apartment buildings or multi-family houses. A separate page is devoted to the Great Lakes Manor and Great Lakes Country Club which clearly highlights the importance of these two properties to the company over the ten pictured on the previous page.

The Great Lakes Country Club was established in 1938 when GLLIC acquired the former Holly Valley Country Club and adjacent property, including two lakes, in Holly Township, Oakland County, some fifty miles to the north. The company purchased the country club as a resort for African Americans and the area around the lake was platted in 1938. The clubhouse had been constructed in 1930 but was destroyed by fire in October 1939. The company constructed a new clubhouse, designed by A. E. Feliciano, in 1940.

It is not known how many other investment properties the company owned outside of their main office locations, or how long the other properties were owned.

What is known, however, is that in 1936, when Kirby Manor was purchased, African Americans in Detroit faced persistent and significant prejudice. Racial restrictive covenants were still legal, and in the mid-1930s a new organization, the Black Legion, continued the “terroristic activities” of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.¹⁷ The Legion advocated for “protests against Negro Children” attending school with white children, and “more rigid residential restrictions against colored citizens.”¹⁸

The Great Lakes Land and Investment Company provided housing and financing for their clients, when freedom of moment was limited and white-owned lending institutions would not provide mortgages. Great Lakes Manor appears to be the “crown jewel” of the Great Lakes Land and Investment Company and Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company’s efforts to provide housing opportunities for African Americans in the city of Detroit, and thus reflects the history of discrimination and segregation in the city.

Great Lakes Manor in the Context of *Apartment Buildings in Detroit, 1892-1970*

Great Lakes Manor meets Criterion A at the local level of significance for a low-rise apartment building in the Classical Revival Style that is associated with housing the city’s African

¹⁷ “Letters are an Insult to Negroes.” *Detroit Free Press*. June 6, 1936.

¹⁸ Ibid.

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American residents and the patterns of segregation being enforced at the time. Once the building was purchased by the Great Lakes Land and Investment Company the building was home to African Americans who sought upscale apartment building living. Charles Mahoney, president of the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company, and his wife lived in the building for over twenty years along with African American nurses, teachers, business owners, and elevator operators.

Great Lakes Manor meets the registration requirements in the *Apartment Buildings in Detroit, 1892-1970* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). Specifically, page F-2 lists examples of specific criteria, including, item number five, that states “Apartment buildings that are important for their association with the city’s various ethnic, racial, religious or social groups; patterns of segregation and/or integration related to them; and the legal and/or social measures used to enforce those patterns.”

Great Lakes Manor is in its original location and the surrounding neighborhood, including other houses and buildings related to the city’s African American history remain intact. The building’s exterior appearance from the period of significance, except for the windows, cornice and doors, are intact, including a painted sign on the back of the building advertising the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company. On the interior the common or shared front door entrance, steps, and corridors remain intact. This building never had a separate lobby space, the cross corridor at the top of the steps with its arched decorative plaster ceiling and checkerboard tile floor served as the common lobby. These features remained under later alterations and have recently been restored. The living units have been slightly reconfigured but are generally in their original locations and all retain kitchens, bathrooms, living rooms and bedrooms. Two common stairs, one near the front of the building and one at the rear of the main corridor retain their original railings and configuration. The interior and exterior of the building retains its overall feeling and character of a 1920s apartment building that housed first Jewish and then African American Detroiters during the first part of the twentieth century.

Great Lakes Manor in the Context of the Draft of *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976* Multiple Property Documentation Form

The significance of Great Lakes Manor is further understood through the draft *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976*, Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). It fits within the first two periods of significance identified by the National Park Service and the MPDF, “Rekindling Civil Rights in Detroit, 1900-1941” and “Birth of Civil Rights in Detroit, 1941-1954.” Within the thematic framework the building falls under the “Housing - The Demand for Fair Housing in Detroit 1918-1976” and the “Employment - Detroit’s Black-Owned Businesses 1900-1976” context themes. It meets the registration requirements for property type “Buildings” under the subtype “Residential Dwelling” under Criterion A at the local level of significance, as the building has association “with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of African American civil rights history.”

Great Lakes Manor has a strong association with the Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company as it was owned by the company’s subsidiary company Great Lakes Land and Investment Company from 1939 until 1969. An advertisement for Great Lakes Mutual Insurance remains painted on

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the rear of the building and Charles Mahoney, president of the company, lived in the building with his wife from about 1942 until at least 1963.

When Kirby Manor Apartments was purchased by Great Lakes Land and Investment Company in 1936 it was part of Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company's efforts to combat the discrimination African Americans faced in Detroit's housing and lending practices. Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company worked to aid the African American community by creating two subsidiary companies sometime between 1929 and 1934, Great Lakes Agency and Great Lakes Land and Investment Company, both with the same officers and board of directors as Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company.

Either through the subsidiary companies or through the insurance company itself, Great Lakes offered real estate mortgages with great success. This was an original aim of the company, to provide loans to African American homeowners and entrepreneurs.

Pages E-5 through E-7 of *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976* MPDF give background to the context themes:

“During the early twentieth century, the main alternative to unskilled work for Detroit's African Americans was to establish their own businesses. Not only did these businesses provide greater opportunity for their owners and employees, but black-owned businesses also catered to the growing black population of the city, which often faced discrimination and segregation in white-owned businesses. In 1928, the black-owned Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company began offering insurance policies to black homeowners. Two years earlier, Detroit's black business owners had established a branch of the National Negro Business League, an organization founded in 1900 by Booker T. Washington to promote the commercial and financial development of black-owned businesses. While Washington had spoken at the Detroit Light Guard Armory as early as 1903, Detroit did not establish a branch of the league until 1926.”

“Employment was not the only realm in which Detroit's African Americans struggled against discrimination in the early part of the twentieth century. Although over a hundred thousand blacks arrived in the city between 1910 and 1930, sometimes at a rate of thousands per month, they were very limited geographically in where they could settle. Prejudice on the part of Detroit's native white and Christian population discouraged ethnic, racial, and religious minorities from settling in the older neighborhoods or in the expanding middle and upper class districts.”

“However, by the 1920s there were several small middle-class enclaves developing outside of the lower east side. Like their white counterparts, black Detroiters aspired to home ownership, but due to restrictive racial covenants and racial prejudice, there were few areas open to them. Blacks looking to purchase homes had to search for areas well away from established white neighborhoods.”

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Buildings/Residential Dwelling – Criterion A

Great Lakes Manor meets the registration requirements for a Building, subtype Residential Dwelling under Criterion A. Page F-9 of *20th Century Civil Rights Sites in the City of Detroit, 1900-1976*, notes that “equal opportunity in housing has special significance in Detroit as it was one of three goals set by the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP, the largest in the nation.”

The building is significant under Criterion A as an example of an apartment building purchased by a prominent African American business and units rented to African Americans during a time when the demand for housing in Detroit was high, while at the same time the geographic area was limited as to where African Americans were allowed to live due to deed restrictions and discriminatory practices. The residents of the building in the late 1930s through the 1960s included African American business owners and middle-class professionals, making the building a good example of well-maintained housing not always available to African Americans at the time, regardless of economic class.

Charles H. Mahoney

The building’s most prominent residents known about at this time were Charles H. Mahoney and his wife Lulu E. (nee Simpson) who lived in apartment 301 from about 1942 until at least 1963. Born in Decatur, Georgia, on May 29, 1886, Mahoney graduated from Decatur schools. He was the sole African American when he attended Olivet College for three years before transferring to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he taught elementary school while finishing his degree. He graduated in 1908 with a Bachelor of Arts. He then attended University of Michigan where he graduated with a law degree in 1911. He passed the bar that same year and moved to Detroit to practice law.

While practicing law he quickly became a leader in Detroit. In 1918 he ran unsuccessfully for Detroit Common Council, and that same year he was appointed by Mayor James Couzens to the Detroit City Planning Commission, the first African American appointed to serve on a city commission. He served on the commission until 1922 when he was appointed to the Wayne County Board of Supervisors, a position he held for ten years. In 1925 he was one of three African American attorneys to assist Clarence Darrow in the defense of Dr. Ossian Sweet.

In 1928 he was one the prominent African Americans to organize the Great Lakes Mutual Association of Michigan (later Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company). He was named president of the company, a role he served until 1958 when he was elected chairman of the board before fully retiring in 1959.

In addition to his role at Great Lakes, Mahoney continued in his private law practice until 1937. He served as legal advisor for the Grand Lodge, Knights of Pythias. In 1932 the lifelong Republican won the nomination for Michigan’s First Congressional district. He lost the election to the Democratic candidate. Despite his loss he remained a leader in the Republican party which no doubt led to his later state and national appointments.

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In 1939, Mahoney was appointed by Governor Frank Fitzgerald as a Commissioner to the Michigan Department of Labor and Industry, the first African American to be so appointed. He served for six years in that capacity.

In 1954, Mahoney was appointed by President Dwight Eisenhower as a full delegate of the United States to the Ninth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. He was the first African American to receive an appointment as a full delegate. Previously African Americans were appointed as alternates. In 1955 he was the first African American appointed to the United States State Department Panel of Inquiry and Conciliation, an international dispute arbitrator. He held the position at least until 1959.

In 1955 he was one of a group of men, and the only and first African American, to organize and serve on the board of directors for a new bank in Detroit, the Public Bank.

In addition to his numerous appointments and work with Great Lakes Insurance, Charles Mahoney worked tirelessly to improve the lives of African Americans in Detroit and Michigan. He was responsible for African Americans being employed in Detroit for CWO and PWA funded projects. He was a leader in the United Negro College Fund drives and encouraged all Great Lakes employees to take part.

Mr. and Mrs. Mahoney had a second home at the Great Lakes Country Club in Holly where they spent summers. Charles Mahoney passed away on January 29, 1966, and Lulu Mahoney passed away on March 14, 1979.

The Pelavin Brothers

Although not nominated for architectural or design significance, some information about the builders of the building is warranted. *Apartment Buildings in Detroit, 1892-1970*, describes the variety and types of firms and people developing apartment buildings in Detroit in the 1910s and 1920s.

“With Detroit’s phenomenal growth in the early decades of the 1900s and the solidification of the apartment house as a financial success, it seemed that everyone was getting into the apartment business, whether they were in the building trades or simply had some extra money to invest in the new market. One class of owner/developer was the architect. ... A much larger class of over/developer included those in the building trades, ranging from individual carpenters up to large construction companies. Builders from Detroit’s Jewish community were particularly successful in the apartment building business. Many of them had emigrated from Russia and Eastern Europe following pogroms of the early twentieth century and used their training in the building trades to develop successful contracting businesses” (Mills, *Apartment Buildings in Detroit*, p. 72).

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The developer and builder of Great Lakes Manor, the Pelavin Brothers, are an example of this trend (the architect for the building has not been determined). A building permit was issued for the building to the Pelavin Brothers in March 1925, and notes a construction cost of twelve thousand dollars. The *Apartment Buildings* MPDF highlights the Pelavin Brothers' important contribution to Detroit's apartment building growth.

“One of the most prolific was the Pelavin Brothers, a building and contracting firm, who built a number of apartment buildings across the city, sometimes under their ownership, sometimes for other owners. The brothers, Louis, Harry, Morris, and Samuel were Jews born in Belarus in the 1880s, while it was part of the Russian Empire. Trained as carpenters, they immigrated to Detroit around 1905. After arriving, they began investing in and building apartments, some in Jewish areas, like Palmer Park and the near northwest area, but also in the Cass Corridor (what is now known as Midtown) and the New Center area. In 1913 Morris and Harry advertised their services in the *Detroit Free Press* as “Carpenters and Builders, Residences a Specialty” with offices on Theodore Street, while by 1917 they were at 1018 Gratiot. Their known apartment buildings were constructed in the 1920s, and include Seward Plaza (127 Seward, 1922), the Delmar Apartments (17111 Second Avenue, 1925), and the Kirby Manor Apartments (457 E. Kirby, 1925), as well as a number of other apartment buildings which are no longer extant, such as Seville Court on Dunbarton Road (Heritage Place), Tehama Court (with Benjamin Fine), and Mila Flores on Alexandrine. The Raleigh at McNichols and 3rd Avenue (1926) was demolished in 2014. Following the stock market crash and beginning of the Great Depression, Harry and Samuel moved to Brooklyn, New York, where Harry died in 1963 and Samuel died in 1964. Louis and Morris stayed in the Detroit area, where they were both listed as occupied in the building trades in the 1940 census, but it is unclear if they constructed any more apartment buildings after the 1920s. Morris died in 1955 in Ferndale and Louis died in 1956 (location unknown)” (Mills, *Apartment Buildings in Detroit*, p. 72).

The initial residents of Kirby Manor Apartments, as the building was first known, were primarily Eastern European Jews and many of the early residents were in the service industry. Some of the first residents included Morris Leibowitz a carpenter; Glen Jones a salesman; William Stoller a drycleaner employee; and Philip Shapiro a laundryman. The 1930 census shows that the majority of the residents had been born in Poland, Hungary, Russia, and Yugoslavia. There were a range of occupations, the four Rosenblatt siblings were salespeople; twenty-three-year-old Isadore Muscovitz was a physician intern, his mother Ida worked in “Jewish welfare.” Sam Farber was a fruit peddler. Julius Hartman was a bookkeeper in the automobile industry, his daughter Louise a music teacher. Morris Sussman was a pharmacist and Isadore Dankner was a railroad switchman.

The 1940 United States census indicates that all the building's residents were African American, the professions continued to range from the service industry to professionals. Elliot Rankin was the apartment building caretaker and his son Elliot Jr. was a garbage collector. Julia Campbell and Jessie Thompson were both graduate nurses. William Adams and his wife Irma were both

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elevator operators, he at a hotel, she at a beauty parlor. Earl Hutchens owned a garage and his wife Thelma was an elementary teacher. A number of residents worked in auto factories as machinists and laborers. Albert Wall was a clerk in the post office.

Subsequent History

Less is known about the residents of Great Lakes Manor in the mid-twentieth century. Detroit city directories skip all the addresses on this block between 1954 and 1974 – the latest directory available, so it is unknown who lived in the building during that time. Urban renewal areas to the south and north of this area spurred the rehabilitation of this building starting in 1989, with the city's support. During the groundbreaking ceremony, Hilanius H. Phillips, a planner for the City of Detroit and local historian stated that the “hotsy totsy” of the black community lived in the building during the 1940s and 1950s. He stated some of the residents of that era included boxer Joe Louis living for a time with his manager, Joe Roxborough; local architect Howard Sims; and a black engineer, Forest Young. However, this information could not be substantiated through city directories or census records.

The building was sold in 1970, one year after Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company merged with North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company. Sometime between then and 1989 when the city sponsored rehabilitation for affordable housing began the building became vacant and deteriorated. At the time there was intense media pressure on the city to deal with the growing number of vacant buildings. A July 14, 1989, *Detroit Free Press* article covering the groundbreaking for the building rehabilitation noted that Mayor Coleman A. Young “criticized the news media, especially the Free Press and WXYZ-TV anchorman Bill Bonds, saying they have encouraged residents who have been demolishing vacant homes on their blocks.” Young further stated, “We’re all frustrated. It’s frustrating to be black and discriminated against, to be poor.” The article further cites a *Detroit Free Press* survey of Detroit that counted 15,215 vacant buildings.

The building was rehabilitated in 1989 under the City of Detroit’s affordable housing programs. The July 13, 1989, groundbreaking ceremony was attended by local African American dignitaries including Detroit mayor Coleman A. Young; State Senator David S. Holmes, and Reverend Horace Sheffield. During the remarks Mayor Young described being a salesman for Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company, and when he visited the building at the time it was known as a “select building in a select neighborhood.” Senator Holmes remarked that this area of Detroit was originally off-limits to African Americans. He summarized the history of the building this way:

This is the third turn over. I seen [*sic*] it when white folks turned it over to us. I seen [*sic*] the “bourgeoisie” of the black community get in, and we were proud that we were able take the building and move into it. And I seen [*sic*] it deteriorated. Now I see the third generation coming along to rehab it and I look for it to be a milestone in the comeback.

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The project was heralded as an affordable housing demonstration and a way to re-use a historically important vacant building during a time when many in the Detroit area were calling for vacant buildings to be torn down. The building was renamed the Alexander Young Terrace Apartments after the mayor although it is unknown how long that building name was used.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .22

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.214509 | Longitude: 83.033999 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

East 22 Feet of Lot 17 and West 38 Feet of Lot 16, D.M. Ferry's Subdivision of O.L. 194 and lot of J.W. Palmer's Subdivision of O.L. 196, also the north 20 75/100 Feet of Lot 8 of O.L. 192, Beaubien Farm, Plat thereof recorded in Liber 17 of Plats, Page 35, Wayne County Records. Commonly known as 457 E. Kirby, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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This is the property historically and currently associated with the building. The property is within the locally designated East Kirby Avenue Historic District. However, this property is being nominated on its own due to its association with Great Lakes Mutual Insurance Company and Charles Mahoney. The remainder of the block does not have this direct association. This is the only apartment building within the local historic district.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kristine Kidorf
organization: Kidorf Preservation Consulting
street & number: 451 East Ferry Street
city or town: Detroit state: MI zip code: 48202
e-mail kristine@kidorfpreservationconsulting.com
telephone: (313) 300-9376
date: January 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Kirby Manor Apartments

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne State: MI

Photographer: Kristine Kidorf

Date Photographed: September 30, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12. Looking northwest at south and east facades.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0001
- 2 of 12. Looking north at south facade.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0002
- 3 of 12. Looking northeast at south façade and west elevation.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0003
- 4 of 12. Looking northwest at south and east facades.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0004
- 5 of 12. Looking south at north elevation.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0005
- 6 of 12. Looking south at detail of "Great Lakes Mutual Insurance" advertisement on north elevation.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0006

Great Lakes Manor

Wayne County, MI

Name of Property

County and State

- 7 of 12. Looking south at front entrance door, vestibule and stair with restored ceiling.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0007
- 8 of 12. Looking east in lobby corridor with restored ceiling and floor.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0008
- 9 of 12. Looking north in first floor corridor with restored floor.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0009
- 10 of 12 Looking west in south staircase.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0010
- 11 of 12. Looking south in third floor front unit.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0011
- 12 of 12. Looking west in third floor front unit bedroom.
MI_Wayne County_Great Lakes Manor_0012

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Great Lakes Manor
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State















