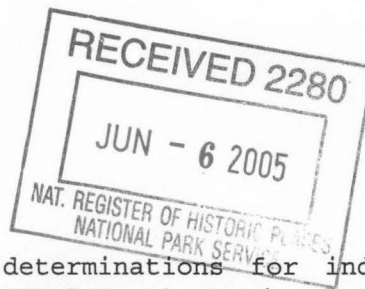


776

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Mellus Newspapers Building

other names/site number N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 1661 Fort Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Lincoln Park vicinity N/A  
state Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163  
zip code 48146

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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      nationally      statewide X locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brian D. [Signature] 5/31/05  
Signature of certifying official Date

Michigan SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7

Page 1

Mellus Newspapers  
Building  
Wayne County, MI

Description

The Mellus Newspapers Building is a rectangular one and two-story commercial building that stands in the midst of a row of generally one-story commercial buildings along Fort Street in Lincoln Park's low-rise business district. The building is comprised of a one-story front section, the original building, and two-story rear addition, as wide, but only half as deep, as the front part. Its front, symmetrical with three square-head steel sash windows on either side of a recessed center entry, is faced in porcelain enamel steel panels, white above a dark red base row of panels suggestive, it seems, of red granite. In the square-head recessed entry, "walls" of glass block above the red base course of panels curve inward in a quarter circle to the entry itself, comprised of a heavy wooden door with single large light in the center beneath a single-light transom. The front windows each contain twenty lights, five high by four across, with a pivoting sash in the lower center that is two lights across by four high. The rear addition is constructed with utilitarian concrete block walls and also displays steel sash windows, but of broader form. The addition's second-story front is set well back from the façade of the original porcelain enamel panel front and is only visible from across Fort Street; its roof projects slightly beyond the addition's front façade between plain parapet/fire walls on either side.

The building faces west-northwest onto Fort Street, a broad highway with wide grassy median that served as part of the main road between Detroit and Toledo prior to the construction of I-75. Fort Street at the point where Southfield Road intersects it just to the southwest of this building is the heart of Lincoln Park's low-rise central business district. The Fort Street frontage contains buildings dating from the 1920s to the 1950s, the heyday of Lincoln Park's development, and later. One-story buildings flank the Mellus Building side-wall-to-side-wall on either side. These buildings stand directly on the sidewalk line.

The interior housed office space occupied by the Mellus Newspapers' editorial staff and some of the firm's printing operations as well. The front entry leads into a reception area. The printing plant occupied much of the back of the street level, with the offices in the small second story. Much of the building's original interior finishes survive, including dark stained wood wainscoting downstairs and vertical floor-to-ceiling woodwork upstairs, acoustical tile ceilings, and fluorescent light fixtures.

Property: Mellus Newspapers Building, Wayne Co., MI

=====  
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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1941 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Property: Mellus Newspapers Building, Wayne Co., MI

Significant Dates 1941  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation N/A\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder N/A\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS) None
- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary Location of Additional Data
- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	320540	4679800	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u> </u> See continuation sheet.					

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Mellus Newspapers  
Building

Page 2

Wayne County, MI

### Significance

Constructed in 1941 for Lincoln Park real estate developer Clarence W. Treadwell and his wife, Evelyn, the Mellus Building housed the editorial offices and some printing operations of Mellus Newspapers, which published newspapers in Lincoln Park and three other Downriver Detroit communities from 1941 until 1986. The Mellus Building is a particularly intact example of the eye-catching but affordable enameled metal panel Moderne commercial buildings that appeared in the Detroit area beginning in the mid-1930s. Few other intact examples of these generally small-scale buildings have been identified in the Detroit area.

Through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth the area now known as Lincoln Park formed part of largely rural Ecorse Township. In the early twentieth century Detroit's expansion began to push development into the area. A real estate boom hit Lincoln Park in 1918 as a result of construction of the Ford Rouge automobile plant in nearby Dearborn. The first few stores around the Fort Street/Southfield Road intersection soon became a near solid line of commercial buildings along Fort near Southfield as Fort itself was rebuilt to serve as the main Detroit-Toledo trunkline. Lincoln Park was incorporated as a village in 1921 and made a city in 1925. By the late 1920s 150 plants that employed 40,000 stood within three miles of Lincoln Park. Development in Lincoln Park slowed during the Great Depression but picked up again before World War II. By the 1950s continuing development left little vacant ground.

Lincoln Park's first newspaper was the *Lincoln Park News*, an eight-page weekly begun in the early 1920s by Edward B. Gibbons' Gibbons Publications, Inc. Established in 1918, Gibbons Publications began publishing the *Ecorse Tribune* the following year and followed within a few years with the *Lincoln Park News*, *Allen Park Record*, and *Melvindale News*, which served adjacent Downriver Detroit communities that all grew up during the 1920s.

In 1925 William S. Mellus went to work as advertising salesman and reporter for Gibbons' newspapers. Mellus (1903-79) got his start in newspapers in 1921 in the circulation department of the *Detroit News*. Nine months later Mellus became a reporter and advertising salesman for *The Wyandotte Record*, a weekly newspaper that published a Lincoln Park edition. He worked for two other papers until September 1923, when he established the *Wyandotte Tribune*. This newspaper lasted only nine months, and Mellus then went back to working as a writer and advertising salesman for another paper before joining Gibbons.

In his years with the Gibbons organization from 1925 to 1933, Mellus advanced from serving as a reporter and advertising salesman to become editor and advertising manager of the four Gibbons newspapers. Late in 1933, however, Mellus started his own newspaper business, the Mellus Newspapers, that competed directly with the Gibbons ones. Mellus' *The Allen Parker*, *The Ecorse Enterprise*, *The Lincoln Parker*, and *The Melvindale Messenger* debuted on November 17, 1933, with copies delivered to 5000 homes. Circulation reportedly grew to 6500 in 1935, 11,550 in 1940, 20,500 in 1945, 36,825 in 1950, and 48,900 in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Mellus Newspapers  
Building

Page 3

Wayne County, MI

1955 (figures reported in Mellus, Oct. 20, 1955).

The Mellus papers were considered “shoppers” – free publications that only contain advertising – and they were delivered free until about 1969. Yet they were never truly shoppers since almost from the first they provided news and editorials as well as the advertising matter that paid the bills. Mellus himself claimed in reminiscences of his publishing career written late in his life in 1973 that he was powerless while working for Gibbons’ newspapers to expose the rampant corruption of local politicians in the villages and townships served by the newspapers because the papers were paid off to look the other way with “excessive sums paid for municipal advertising.” He began a campaign in his own papers to expose it shortly after starting them. For this, he claimed, he was attacked physically many times and “marked for death twice in 1935” by the Black Legion, whose members in the Detroit area included some of the politicians his editorials lambasted for their corruption (Mellus, Nov. 28, 1973). The legion was a radical nationwide secret society whose hood-wearing members (similar to Ku Klux Klan garb) pursued a conservative political and nativist agenda, along with plain old corruption, with intimidation, including murders and floggings, of those who stood in their way. The legion’s power in Detroit was broken beginning in May 1935 when the Detroit newspapers first broke the story on the Detroit connection.

In December 1938 Mellus’ old employer, E. C. Gibbons, retired from business because of ill health and sold his four weekly newspapers – which claimed a total circulation of 11,000 weekly – to Treadwell Publications, Inc., owned by Lincoln Park businessman and real estate developer Clarence W. Treadwell and his wife Evelyn. Early in 1941 the Mellus Newspapers absorbed the Treadwell newspapers. Mellus served as publisher of the consolidated newspapers, which appeared under his firm’s names thereafter.

The Mellus Building at 1661 Fort Street was built in 1941 and occupied by the Mellus Newspapers by late June 1941. C. W. and Evelyn Treadwell, whose real estate development activities in Lincoln Park dated back as far as 1920, were the initial owners. It is not clear whether the Treadwells initially planned it for their Treadwell Publications or for Mellus Newspapers. In any event, the Treadwells sold the property to Violet Mellus in December 1944. The Melluses later purchased the building next door at 1667 Fort Street and the two buildings housed the Mellus Newspapers editorial offices and some of its printing operations until the fall of 1986. Since then the Mellus Building has stood vacant.

The Mellus Building, with its bicolored front and recessed central entry with curving glass block sides and original steel sash windows, is a distinguished and well preserved example of the porcelain enamel steel panel-front variety of Moderne of the mid-1930s to early 1950s in the low-rise commercial streetscape along Fort Street that serves as Lincoln Park’s business district. Architectural terra cotta, pigmented structural glass, and porcelain enamel steel paneling were popular in the 1930s as alternatives to more costly masonry construction.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8

Mellus Newspapers  
Building

Page 4

Wayne County, MI

Porcelain enamel sheets, panels, tiles, and shingles all originated in the mid-1920s, but true commercial markets did not develop until the early 1930s. The White Castle restaurant chain probably pioneered the use of porcelain enamel sheets in 1925, when it designed and constructed a St. Louis restaurant with a porcelain enamel interior. In 1929 in Wichita, Kansas, White Castle opened the first building featuring porcelain enamel panels on both the interior and exterior. ... The largest area of growth – in architectural panels – coincided with the increasing popularity of the Moderne style. Many stores, theaters, restaurants, and particularly gas stations – Esso, Mobil, Texaco, Shell – used porcelain enamel to establish images of modernity. Architects became attracted to porcelain enamel because of its purported color permanence, flatness, weathering characteristics, and resistance to abrasion (Jester, p. 257).

The Mellus is one of a substantial number of porcelain enamel panel Moderne buildings built in commercial districts in Detroit and its newly developing fringes in the period of the mid-1930s down to the early 1950s. Rebecca Binno Savage's newly published *Art Deco in Detroit* provides illustrations evocative of the broad variety of these buildings, including stores, bars and restaurants, movie theaters, and gas stations, once present in metropolitan Detroit. No systematic survey of them has been performed and little information is currently available on most of them. A few examples, such as the 1937 Elwood Bar, by architect Charles Noble, in downtown Detroit and the 1939 B & C Market in Royal Oak, have been restored and are in use, and the Temple Bar is included in the newly national register-listed Cass Park Historic District in Detroit, but many others stand underutilized and unappreciated, if not abandoned altogether.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9

Mellus Newspapers

Page 5

Building  
Wayne County, MI

Bibliography

**Newspaper Stories**

"A Statement of Policy." *Lincoln Park News*. Dec. 9, 1938. [Announcing sale to Treadwell].

"Mellus Newspapers Begin 53<sup>rd</sup> Year of Publication." *The Mellus Newspapers*. April 7, 1971.

"Mellus Views the News of Four Decades Ago." *The Mellus Newspapers*. Nov. 28, 1973.

"Prize-Winning Mellus Newspapers Serve Downriver Area 22 Years." *The Mellus Newspapers*. Oct. 20, 1955.

"William Mellus Is Honored by Outgoing Park Council." *The Mellus Newspapers*. Nov. 24, 1971.

*The Lincoln Parker*. Issues of June 6 and June 26, 1941. Address listed as 1534 Fort in 1<sup>st</sup>, 1661 Fort in 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Other Building-specific Sources**

Interviews by Leslie Lynch-Wilson.

Geraldine Collins, daughter of William Mellus, July 16, 2004.

Ernie Nagy, retired Mellus employee, July 16 and Oct. 14, 2004.

Don Treadwell, Jr., grandson of Clarence W. Treadwell, Oct. 15, 2004.

Lincoln Park, city of. City assessor's records. [Showing construction date of 1941.]

**Context**

Elwood Bar national register nomination. Copy at SHPO.

Jester, Thomas E. "Porcelain Enamel." Pp. 254-61 in Thomas C. Jester, ed. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. National Park Service/McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995.

Savage, Rebecca Binno, and Greg Kowalski. *Art Deco in Detroit*. Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, Inc., 2004. The Mellus Building appears on p. 46.

Property: Mellus Newspapers Building, Wayne Co., MI

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Robert O. Christensen, National Register Coordinator  
from draft by Leslie Lynch-Wilson, Lincoln Park Preservation Alliance  
organization MI SHPO date April 2005

street & number 702 W. Kalamazoo St. telephone 517/335-2719

city or town Lansing state MI zip code 48909-7420

=====

Additional Documentation

=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

=====

Property Owner

=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Lincoln Park

street & number 1355 Southfield Rd. telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Lincoln Park state MI zip code 48146

=====

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10

Page 6

Mellus Newspapers  
Building  
Wayne County, MI

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 17 and 18, excepting therefrom that part of said lots deeded to Wayne County Road Commissioners, Fort Street Heights being a subdivision of the northerly 6 acres of the southerly 12 acres of Private Claim 61, Ecorse Township, Wayne County, Michigan, according to the plat thereof as recorded in Liber 33, page 18 of plats, Wayne County records.

Boundary Justification:

Includes the entire plot on which the building stands.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section            Photos

Page              7

Mellus Publications  
Building  
Wayne County, MI

Photographer: Leslie Lynch-Wilson

Date: 12/5/2004

Negatives:    Lincoln Park Preservation Alliance  
                  P. O. Box 743  
                  Lincoln Park, MI 48146

1. Façade detail from west
2. Façade from northwest
3. Rear façade from east

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Mellus Newspapers Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 6/06/05      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/07/05  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/22/05      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/20/05  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 05000716

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    7/29/05 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.




1. Mellus Newspapers Building  
Lincoln Park, MI Wayne Co.



1661

15 861 2114 N-2 2


2.  Mellus Newspapers  
Lincoln Park, MI  
Wayne Co.

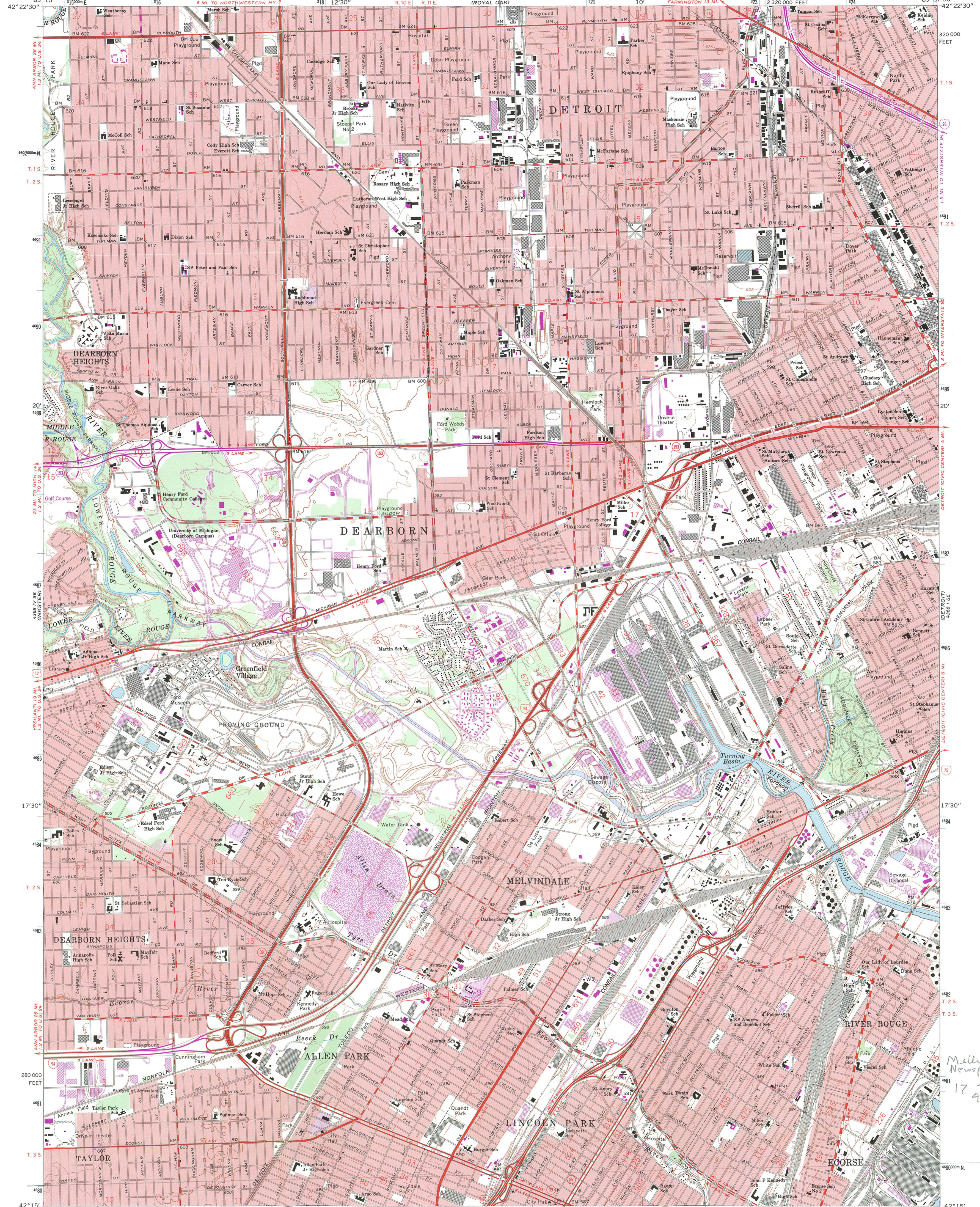


OPEN

WALSH

2 5-N 5-N 6117 198 98

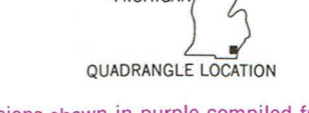
3.  Mellus Newspapers  
Lincoln Park, MI  
Wayne Co.



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Michigan agencies  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and City of Detroit  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
Topography by planetable surveys 1939. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966-67. Field checked 1968  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Michigan coordinate system, south zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 7 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather  
Interstate Route  
U. S. Route  
State Route



DEARBORN, MICH.  
N4215-W8307.5/7.5  
1968  
PHOTOREVISED 1983  
DMA 4368 I SW-SERIES V862

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DIVISION  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Mellus Newspapers Bldg  
17 320540  
4679800



JENNIFER GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARTS AND LIBRARIES  
LANSING

DR. WILLIAM ANDERSON  
DIRECTOR



May 31, 2005

Ms. Janet Matthews, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Matthews:

Enclosed are National Register nomination materials for the Mellus Newspapers Building in Wayne County, Michigan. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to the submission of the nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, National Register coordinator, by phone at 517/335-2719 or by e-mail at [Christensenro@michigan.gov](mailto:Christensenro@michigan.gov).

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer

BDC:roc