

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sibley, Frederic M., Lumber Company Office Building
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 6460 Kercheval Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Detroit N/A vicinity
state Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163 zip code 48207

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Nathaniel B. Yepert 2/11/91
Signature of certifying official Date
National State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____

Patrick W. Anders 4/4/91

(sw) Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade/business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Asphalt

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The F.M. Sibley Lumber Company Office Building consists of two structures attached by means of a short corridor connector. The front building is a flat-roof, red brick structure, eighty-five by thirty-four feet in ground dimensions, with the long side facing the street. The rear building, clothed in brick on two sides and clapboarded on the third, is a one-story, hip-roof building that is forty-six by sixty-eight feet in ground dimensions, and is connected to the front structure on its short side. Large dormers in the back provide a partial second floor. The two-story front section exemplifies early twentieth-century "Commercial Brick" construction, with Classical-Renaissance-inspired detailing including a pilastered central entrance and cornice constructed of limestone.

Paired limestone pilasters topped by Corinthian capitals frame the central entrance, the pilasters on either side flanking a vertical recessed light. The facade is punctuated by long vertical lights and has limestone belt coursing at the frieze line and a limestone cornice. The frieze below the upper parapet is highlighted by a central cartouche flanked by limestone medallions. Surmounting the building entrance, chiseled in limestone, is the legend "F.M. Sibley Lumber Co." The building was a proud symbol of the success of the F.M. Sibley Lumber Company, which was the second largest lumber company in Detroit in 1925 when this office building was constructed.

Vertical piers suggestive of classical pilasters divide the facade into eleven bays. Eleven windows boldly punctuate the second story of the front facade, and eight of these are separated from similar first-floor windows directly below by limestone panels set in recessed brick spandrels. A flower appears in the center of each limestone panel. Four types of flowers in all, including the Tudor rose, are used. The flowers are cut in relief and are surrounded by raised circles which contrast with the recessed fluted background. Each panel has a brick frame cornered by small squares of limestone. Each window has a limestone sill, and the first-floor windows rest on bricks set with the headers exposed. The side facades are finished in a similar fashion, although without the central entrance and mini-parapet. The building stands on a base of limestone, and the small raised central, front parapet is flanked by limestone consoles, and is topped by a low central

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Continuation Sheet

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capstone of limestone. The frieze is topped by a limestone cornice.

Inside the building, used primarily for administrative offices, one finds wainscoting and rich wood panelling on the eight rooms of the first floor of the main building, and also in the rear building. The former president's office, located in the southeast corner of the rear building, is panelled with gumwood and glass. The entry contains a full-turn staircase and landing with wainscoting and turned spindles and nosings. The other rooms are panelled with mahogany, birch, and quarter-sawed oak and glass, and have hardwood floors -- all testimony to the variety of woods and finely crafted trims the firm could provide. In fact, the building employed at least one dozen types of wood on the interior.

The hip-roofed rear building was constructed in 1917, replacing an old, timber, small, one-and-a-half-story office building across the street that was later used by a coal firm. When the large front building was built in 1925, the 1917 structure was moved to the rear of the new building and attached by a small corridor. Prior to the move, the Beaufait (east) red brick facade of this older building was the front facade, and it is rhythmically punctuated by six large rectangular windows trimmed with limestone lintels. A baseboard of limestone cloaks the brick base of this side. The south wall of this section has two hip-roofed dormers with three windows each, creating a tiny second story. Six windows of varying size highlight this brick facade. Each window is trimmed with a plain limestone lintel, and the brick base has no limestone trim. Clapboards sheath the western facade, which would have been the rear of this building from 1917 to 1925. An assortment of window shapes and a single door interrupt this facade, and a red brick base supports it.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Commerce

Period of Significance

1925
1917-41

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:
 State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 1 7 3 3 4 1 6 0 4 6 9 0 7 4 0
Zone Easting Northing
C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing
D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 102 and 104 and east 15 ft. of lot 105, Traugott Schmidts Subdivision, Plats 15/25.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Entire lot on which the building stands.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julie Riemenschneider/R.O. Christensen
organization Bureau of History date Jan., 1991
street & number 717 W. Allegan St. telephone 517/335-2719
city or town Lansing state MI zip code 48918

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1SIGNIFICANCE

The F.M. Sibley Lumber Company Office Building reflected the size and prosperity of the Sibley firm, which was then -- at this time of enormous building construction in Detroit -- at its peak. The building is notable for its elegant finish and size among lumber office buildings in Michigan. The fine Colonial woodwork of the interior was an advertisement to the visitor of the variety and quality of wood and the impressive craftsmanship that the company could put at the prospective purchaser's disposal. The firm did some wholesale business, but was primarily a retail business, dealing in lumber and all manner of building materials. Like other such firms, they manufactured not only lumber, but other wood building products such as sash, blinds, doors, trim, staircases, and porch woodwork in their own planing mills and carpentry shops. Detroit was one of America's fastest growing cities in the 1910's and 1920's, and a vast amount of building took place in those decades. The F.M. Sibley Lumber Company, with its seven yards (by the late 1920's), appears to have taken every possible advantage of that business.

F.M. Sibley was organized in 1895 by Frederic Messenger Sibley. Sibley, born in Bangor, Maine, in 1849, learned the logging business at an early age on the Penobscot River. At age twelve he left home, and arrived in Detroit, Michigan by the age of fifteen. He worked various odd jobs in Detroit, and then left to become the foreman of a log drive on the White River in Montague, Michigan for one and one-half years. For some time he scaled timber for a living, thereby becoming well-known in lumber trade circles. Sibley returned to Detroit in about 1875, married Mary J. Clapp, and engaged in the oyster business with one Wilber McKeegan. After a few years, McKeegan left town, leaving Sibley with the company debts. Sibley went to work for Gage & Miller, a Detroit lumber yard. By 1884 he had become general manager of the newly formed W.A.C. Miller Lumber Co., apparently formed from the former Gage & Miller firm. Detroit city directories down to the 1896 edition list him as manager of the Miller firm, in which he is reported to have had a financial interest.

Nearly all sources agree that Sibley established the F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. in 1895. A 1909 Memorandum of Agreement under which the firm became a corporation contains the statement that F.M. Sibley had "been for twenty-five years last past and upwards, engaged in the lumber business in the City of Detroit, under the firm name of F.M. Sibley Lumber Company...." Perhaps what was

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meant was that Sibley had been in the lumber business for twenty-five years "and upwards," rather than that the F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. had been in existence that long. In any event, the firm established its first yard at Kercheval and the Belt Line in Detroit. The company was incorporated in 1909, with Mr. Sibley, his son, Frederic Merrill Sibley, wife Mary J. Sibley, and business associate Harry H. Bergen as members.

Frederic Merrill Sibley served as treasurer of the firm beginning in 1908 and, when his father died in October, 1912, became president. Frederic Merrill Sibley was born in 1883 and was a graduate of the Detroit College of Law. He married in 1908 Mabel M. Bessenger, who, during the 1920's, followed Mary J. Sibley as vice-president of the company.

The F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. still had only a single yard when Frederic Merrill Sibley became treasurer, but by the late 1920's it had grown to comprise seven yards. The following were the firm's yards as of 1926:

Kercheval Yard, 6460 Kercheval, established 1895.
Jefferson Yard, 12241 East Jefferson, established by 1911.
Hamilton Yard, 15141 Hamilton, by 1913.
Grand River Yard, 10471 Grand River, by 1915.
Warren Yard, 13111 West Warren, by 1924.
Outer Drive Yard, 5185 East Outer Drive, by 1926.
Allen Park Yard, Champaign Road, by 1926.

In addition, the company built its own millwork plant following World War I at the Kercheval Yard.

Sibley Lumber Company's rapid growth in the early twentieth century reflected the dramatic growth of the city of Detroit in the same time period due to the growth of industry -- particularly of the automobile industry. An estimated 170,000 housing units were built within Detroit's corporate limits during the 1920's, with additional construction in the suburbs. The previously almost rural fringes of the city saw the most intensive development, with entire neighborhoods being platted and largely built up within a few years' time span. The six Sibley lumber yards founded in the 1910's and 20's were sited around the city's fringes to take advantage of this building activity.

In expanding so rapidly and in locating lumber yards in these developing areas, Sibley was not alone among Detroit lumber firms. Advertisements in the Detroit directories in the mid-1920's show that the city contained several other large lumber and millwork

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firms. In 1924 the Detroit Lumber Company had eight yards, the Braun Lumber Company six, the Lowrie & Robinson Lumber Company five, and three other firms four yards each. Lowrie & Robinson had nine yards by 1926 and Bruan, which had bought out two other firms, eighteen by 1927. The advertisements make clear that the great majority of these yards stood in the newly developing areas around the city's edges.

The original F.M. Sibley Lumber Company office was a small front-gable, frame structure that stood at the southeast corner of Kercheval and Beaufait Avenues, across Beaufait from the present building. In 1917 Sibley built a new frame office building, now the rear portion of the building being nominated, at the southwest corner of the two avenues. The building permit, dated June 18, 1917, was issued to Baxter, O'Dell & Halprin, architects. At about the peak of its growth, in 1925, the Sibley firm enlarged this building with a large two-story front addition that gave the building an entirely new appearance and more than doubled its size. The building permit for this structure is dated January 22, 1925. No architect is named and the architect is unknown.

The new building, with the street-facing side of the older part presumably encased in brick at this time, is a fine example of 1920's office building design with its limestone-trim, brick facade and Colonial-inspired interior staircase and other woodwork -- including offices panelled in woods such as gumwood (the president's office), mahogany, birch, and quarter-sawn oak. The building was a testament not only to the size and importance of the Sibley Company but to the quality of the building materials and craftsmanship the company was prepared to put at its customers' disposal.

The building is one of the most substantial and impressive lumber company office buildings constructed in Michigan in the generally heady days of the early twentieth century. The Bureau has knowledge of only one other important Michigan example, the Cobbs & Mitchell Building (1905-07) in Cadillac. A limestone- and terra-cotta-trimmed, brick, Neo-Classical Revival structure with an interior finished in various types of maple, birch, beech, oak, and hemlock, it was designed by architect George D. Mason of Detroit.

Sibley Lumber, like the city of Detroit in general, suffered severely during the Depression of the 1930s. By 1934 the Jefferson, Hamilton, Warren, and Allen Park yards had all been sold. According to Frederic Merrill Sibley's son, Frederic Merrill Sibley, 2nd, business improved somewhat in the later 1930's, with

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Section number 8 Page 4

a short-lived housing boom, and remained at a steady but slow level during World War II with the firm providing material for defense housing, cantonments, military supplies, and special orders such as atmosphere-controlled shipping cases for aircraft engines. Following the war's end, business boomed as the pent-up demand for housing and other buildings burst. F.M. Sibley again expanded, opening new yards in the growing suburban towns of Livonia, Lincoln Park, and St. Clair Shores in the 1950s under the direction of Frederic Merrill Sibley, 2nd, who had assumed the presidency in 1946 with the death of his father the previous year. The corporation continued in business until 1964, when it was dissolved and the yards sold off because the stockholders, a growing number of family members scattered across the country, were no longer interested in the lumber business and felt that greater investment opportunities lay elsewhere.

The Sibley Lumber Company Office Building is to be renovated to house a gallery for the work of local artists.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burton, Clarence M., and Burton, M. Agnes, Editors. History of Wayne County and the City of Detroit, Michigan. 3 vols. Chicago-Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930. Vol. III, pp. 747-49.

Burton, Clarence M.; Stocking, William; and Miller, Gordon G., Editors. The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922. 4 vols. Detroit-Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922. Vol. III, pp. 675-76.

Detroit, City of. Building permits, nos. 16438 and 56119. Copies in F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building working file, Bureau of History.

Detroit Free Press. Obituary notice for F. Merrill Sibley, 6/15/1945. Copy in F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building working file, Bureau of History.

Detroit News, The. Obituary notice for F. Merrill Sibley, 6/15/1945. Copy in F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building working file, Bureau of History.

Detroit News Tribune. Obituary notice for Frederic Messenger Sibley, 10/4/1912. Copy in F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building working file, Bureau of History.

Polk, R.M., & Co. Detroit City Directory. Detroit, 1885 to 1934 editions.

Sibley, Frederic Merrill, 2nd. Letters dated 7/12/1990, 8/3/1990, and 8/20/1990. F.M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building working file, Bureau of History.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Photographs

Frederic M. Sibley Lumber Co. Office Building
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Photographer: Edie Carlisle

Date: Nov., 1989

Negatives: Muccioli Studio Gallery, 511 Beaubien, Detroit, MI 48226

1. Exterior from the north
2. Exterior from the northeast
3. Exterior from the south
4. Front entrance detail from the northwest
5. Front detail from the northwest
6. Staircase detail, front lobby
7. President's office detail
8. Office detail

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sibley, Frederic M., Lumber Company Office Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 2/19/91 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/05/91
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/21/91 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/05/91
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 91000329

NOMINATOR: STATE

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: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4/4/91 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

This structure, expanded to its present size in 1925, is historically significant as testimony to the effect of Detroit's building boom of the 1910's & 1920's on suppliers of construction materials. It is also important architecturally as an unusually large & impressive lumber yard building, with an elaborately crafted interior testifying to the high quality woods & craftsmanship that the firm could supply.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept/A+C
REVIEWER Harper
DISCIPLINE Historian
DATE 4/4/91

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y see attached SLR Y N

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

___summary paragraph
___completeness
___clarity
___applicable criteria
___justification of areas checked
___relating significance to the resource
___context
___relationship of integrity to significance
___justification of exception
___other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91000329

Date Listed: 4/4/91

Sibley, Frederic M., Lumber Co. Off. Bldg.
Property Name

Wayne
County

MICHIGAN
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Patrick Andrus
Signature of the Keeper

4/10/91
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 8

This nomination was amended to check Criterion Consideration B, since the 1917 part of the building was moved in 1925, and to show Baxter, O'Dell and Halprin as the architects of the 1917 building and "unknown" as the architect of the 1925 addition.

These changes were confirmed by phone with Bob Christiansen, of the Michigan SHPO (4/10/91).

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



Sibley Lumber Co. Office Bldg.
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI
#1

Photo
9/5/6



Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, MI

#2



Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI

#3



J.M. STEALEY LUMBER CO.

6460

Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI
#4



Sibley Lumber Co, Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI

5



Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI
6

4160 Hercheval Stair case

Photo by:
Edie Carlisle
(313) 882-6277



Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI
#7

13

Photo by:
Eddie Carlisle
(313) 882-6277

6460 Rechercheal wood panels in President's office that I'm not going to remove

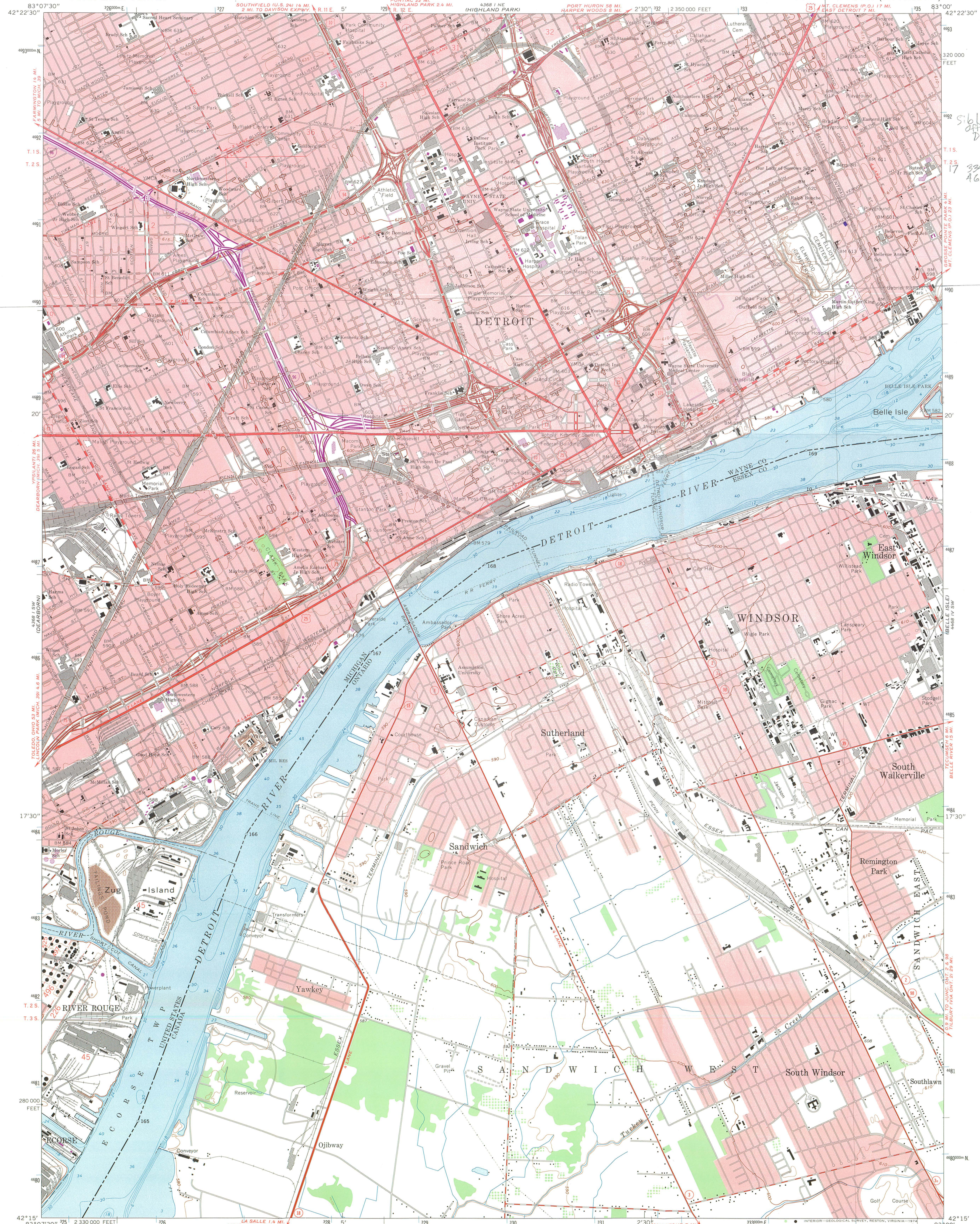


Sibley Lumber Co. Office
Detroit, Wayne Co., MI
8

(10)

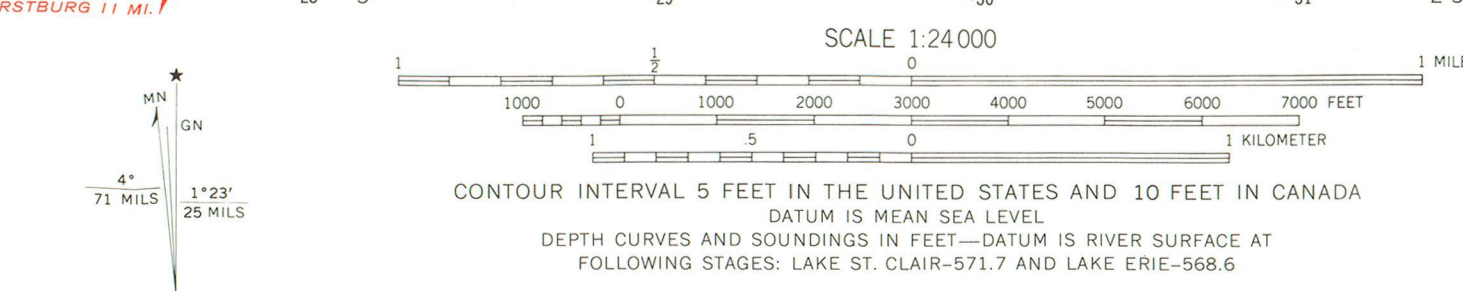
Photo by:
Eddie Carlisle
(313) 882-6277

6460 / Recheval & Beautail in side



Sibley Lumber Co.
Office Bldg
Detroit, Mich
334160
4690740

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Michigan agencies
Control by USGS, USC&GS, U. S. Lake Survey, and City of Detroit
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
Topography by planimetric surveys 1938. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966-67. Field checked 1968.
Canadian portion copied in part from Windsor quadrangle (1:25 000) 1960, Army Survey Establishment, R. C. E.
Selected hydrographic data compiled from U. S. Lake Survey Charts 41 and 412 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
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



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

THE U. S. PORTION OF THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY THE U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1973. This information not field checked. Canadian portion not revised

DETROIT, MICH.—ONT.
N4215—W8300/7.5
1968
PHOTOREVISED 1973
AMS 4368 I SE—SERIES V862

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF STATE
RICHARD H. AUSTIN SECRETARY OF STATE



LANSING
MICHIGAN 48918

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FEB 19 1991

NATIONAL
REGISTER

February 6, 1991

Ms. Carol D. Shull, Chief of Registration
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are National Register of Historic Places nomination materials for the Sibley Lumber Company Office Building in Detroit, Michigan. I certify that the intent-to-nominate notification requirements have been fulfilled. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register. No notarized statement of objection or written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you.

Please direct all questions concerning this nomination to Robert O. Christensen, National Register Coordinator (517/335-2719).

Sincerely,

Kathryn B. Eckert
Acting State Historic Preservation Officer
Bureau of History