

SUNNYSIDE ADDITION

South of East Maumee Street along Naomi and Dorothy Avenues and
Ruby and Bohn Streets
Madison Center
Lenawee County
Michigan

HALS MI-5

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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SUNNYSIDE ADDITION

HALS NO. MI-5

Location: South of East Maumee Street along Naomi and Dorothy Avenues and Ruby and Bohn Streets, Madison Township, Lenawee County, Michigan
Lat: 41.894528 Long: -84.012528 (Parking lot of Sunnyside Cafe, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

Significance: Sunnyside is a residential subdivision outside Adrian, Michigan, that has been home to a predominantly Mexican-American population since the 1940s. Seasonal migrant workers were recruited from Mexico and Texas to work in Adrian's defense plants during World War II. Many of those families established their first permanent homes in Sunnyside and continue to live there today. Sunnyside is significant at the state and local level for its association with Hispanic assimilation, and as an example of the class and economic barriers that Mexican-Americans faced during the second half of the twentieth century.

Description: The Sunnyside Addition is a low-density, primarily residential subdivision. It is located in Madison Township, directly east of Adrian in central Lenawee County, Michigan (see attached aerial map). The subdivision features a rectilinear, gridiron street plan. The major thoroughfare at the north end of the subdivision, E. Maumee Street (Business U.S. Highway 223), provides primary access to the neighborhood. Within the subdivision, Naomi and Dorothy avenues are oriented on a north-south axis, and Ruby and Bohn streets are on an east-west axis. All interior roads are paved and measure 50'-0" wide. The lack of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks contributes to a rural feel within the neighborhood.

As platted in 1906, Sunnyside consisted of 103 lots (see attached plat map). Most lots originally measured 117'-0" x 50'-0", but several lots were subsequently combined. The subdivision currently consists of 81 rectangular and irregularly-shaped lots. Four commercial buildings and one clubhouse are located on the south side of E. Maumee Street.

Sunnyside has experienced an extended period of development since 1906, with the majority of residences dating from 1940-1960. Homes within the neighborhood are typically detached, single-family, one-story vernacular structures that lack exterior decorative detailing. Interior spaces are generally small and contain 2,000 square feet or less. Most of the Sunnyside homes feature wood frame construction and gabled roofs; exterior wall cladding materials include wood, asbestos shingle, vinyl, aluminum and stucco. Alterations are common within the neighborhood and include additions and replacement of

original exterior wall cladding and windows. A small number of pre-1962 garages remain and sit to the side or rear of their associated primary dwelling.

Each lot has a concrete or gravel driveway at the front or side of the house. Fencing, if present, is 3'-0" high or lower and made of chain link, metal wire, or wood pickets. The streetscape within the neighborhood is irregular due to varied setbacks. Similarly, landscaping is not uniform throughout the neighborhood. Some front yards feature low, manicured hedgerows and/or flower beds. A small number of residents have erected statues in the front or rear yards. One particularly unique statue type identified in the neighborhood is a grotto that consists of a cast-iron bathtub that has been cut in half to serve as a shelter for a statue of the Virgin Mary. Mature maple, oak, ash, and pine are common throughout the neighborhood. Non-historic cobra-head street lights mounted on wood utility poles illuminate the neighborhood.

History: Mexican-American migrant farm laborers first came to southeastern Michigan from Mexico and Texas in the 1920s, working in the sugar beet fields around Blissfield (in Lenawee County). As industrial production ramped up during World War II in nearby Adrian, the county seat, many of these migrant workers (some of whom had permanently relocated to Michigan, rather than returning south each winter) were enticed to move to the larger town by the ready availability of steady and better-paying work. Les Brown, the founder and plant manager of Magnesium Fabricators (a subsidiary of the Bohn Aluminum company), was among the first to actively recruit Mexican-Americans to work in the Adrian factories.

At first, many of these new workers were housed in temporary facilities at the Lenawee County Fairgrounds on the east side of Adrian. The fairground facilities were extremely cramped and uncomfortable, and most families sought out more permanent housing as soon as they could. One neighborhood in particular became home to a large number of Mexican-American factory workers – Sunnyside. Sunnyside was originally platted in 1906 in Madison Township, just east of Adrian's corporate limits, and was known as a lawless, rough-and-tumble neighborhood. City directories indicate that Mexican-Americans began moving into the neighborhood during World War II. While the community remained ethnically mixed, Hispanic surnames accounted for fifty percent of neighborhood residents by 1950 and eighty-five percent by 1990.

Following the post-war boom, some of Adrian's factories continued to succeed while others struggled. In the 1950s and 1960s Hispanic residents of Sunnyside continued to find work in the Bohn factories and Stubnitz-Green on the east side of town, as well as other places around the city. Sunnyside remained an economically depressed neighborhood, however, and experienced many problems due to a lack of city services. Two efforts by Sunnyside residents to achieve annexation by the city of Adrian in the early 1950s failed at the ballot

box, and an effort by Madison Township to link homes in the neighborhood to a nearby municipal interceptor sewer was likewise unsuccessful. In 1962 Sunnyside was the scene of a dysentery outbreak, owing in large part to the fact that most of the homes still had no indoor running water and residents relied on outhouses.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Sunnyside was at the center of another public health issue – this time, environmental pollution by the Anderson Development Company (ADC). From 1970 to 1979, ADC manufactured a potentially carcinogenic chemical called Curene 442, a plastic hardening agent. In the 1980s, testing revealed high concentrations of the chemical in sediments and soils within a two-mile radius of the ADC plant. Sunnyside, which abutted the ADC property, was especially hard hit. Local, state and federal agencies responded with an aggressive cleanup and monitoring program in Sunnyside, which included the removal of wells and the connection of homes to city water lines. Cleanup of the neighborhood was completed in 1993.

Today, Sunnyside remains a predominantly Mexican-American community on the outskirts of Adrian. The Sunnyside Café, a Mexican restaurant at the north end of the neighborhood, has become a focal point for the community. Some families who first moved to the neighborhood over half a century ago still remain, now in their second, third or even fourth generation of residency.

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Date Completed: July 30, 2012



Typical streetscape, facing southeast on Dorothy Street, 1600 block (Jennifer Ross, 2012).



Typical streetscape, facing northeast on Naomi Street, 1600 block (Jennifer Ross, 2012).



Typical streetscape, facing southeast on Bohn Street, 2000 block (Jennifer Ross, 2012).



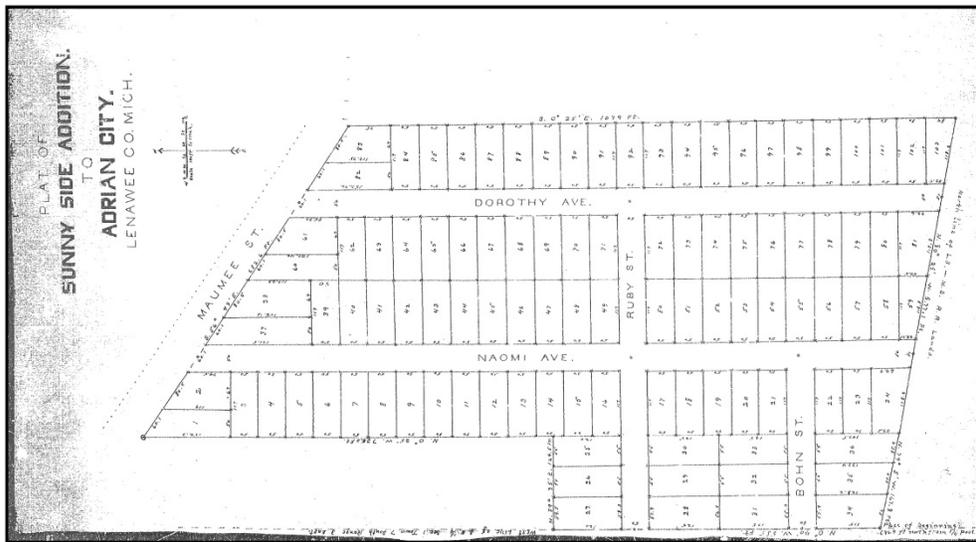
2400 block of E. Maumee, showing commercial resources within the neighborhood (Jennifer Ross, 2012).



Grotto/statuary at 1628 Naomi, facing southwest (Jennifer Ross, 2012).



2012
 Sunnyside Addition
 Aerial Map



1906
 Sunnyside Addition
 Plat Map