

# City of Buchanan, Berrien County, Michigan Reconnaissance-Level Survey Report September 2012



**Prepared for: Michigan  
Historic Preservation Network**

**Prepared by: McGeen and Boscarino, Architectural  
Historians**

**5023 Commonwealth St.  
Detroit, MI 48208  
313.806.4031  
timothy.boscarino@gmail.com**

## 1. Executive Summary

This report, prepared on behalf of the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, seeks to identify potential National Register of Historic Places-eligible resources in the city of Buchanan, Michigan. As many of the city's historic properties have already been listed on the National Register in a series of four listings (The Union Block Building, the Buchanan Downtown Historic District, the Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, and the Zinc Collar Pad Company), this report focuses exclusively on areas of the city not already covered by these four listings.

A map of the survey area is shown on page 38. This document surveys a total of 1,429 acres at the reconnaissance level.

This report identifies the following areas as demonstrating a strong potential for National Register eligibility:

- Bainton/Gimlin House
- Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant
- Claremont Street Survey Area
- Clark Equipment Company Survey Area
- Electro-Voice Factory
- Liberty Heights Survey Area
- Oak Ridge Cemetery
- Redbud-Days-Oak Survey Area

Final determinations regarding National Register eligibility will require a follow-up, intensive-level survey of these areas.

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### 3. Credits and Credentials

Denise McGeen and Timothy Boscarino, architectural historians, meet the federal 36 CFR Part 16 Professional Qualifications Standards for both Architectural History and History. Denise McGeen possesses a Master of Arts in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany and a Graduate Certificate in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. Timothy Boscarino has a Bachelor of Arts in History and several years experience in conducting historic resource surveys and National Register of Historic Places nominations.

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) provides funding for this project.

The project team would like to thank Donald Ryman of the Buchanan Preservation Society for providing valuable information and assistance.

### 4. Objectives

The objective of this reconnaissance-level survey is to identify historic resources in the city of Buchanan that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), either individually or as a district. In addition, the survey seeks to identify any historic resources that do not meet the standards and criteria for NRHP listing but that may be considered for an alternative means of recognition, such as the creation of an architectural conservation district.

A reconnaissance-level survey, as defined by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, is “a preliminary look at an area's historic resources, which makes it possible to focus intensive level survey efforts on the most worthy resources.” It is “the first step in a more comprehensive survey program.” Typically, a reconnaissance-level survey identifies properties that merit further study, and distinguishes them from areas that lack historic significance.

The contents of this report will be used to assist city planners in future preservation planning activities. In addition, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and MSHDA will use the report as an example of a critical community assessment component in municipal and regional planning processes statewide.

### 5. Methodology

The project team drove or walked all streets in the survey area, studying architectural styles and building materials to identify significant concentrations of structures, or significant individual structures, that appeared to be approaching or that exceeded fifty years of age and that appeared to retain a high degree of historic and architectural integrity.



Data obtained by visual assessment was supplemented with information from several other sources to ensure that significant resources were not overlooked. The project team consulted *Buchanan: Past and Future*, a 1976 historic resource survey prepared by the Buchanan historic district study committee that identified significant individual structures throughout most of the city. The project team also consulted with historian Donald Ryman of the Buchanan Preservation Society and archivist John Urschel of the Buchanan District Library, who assisted in the identification of significant resources.

The project team chose this approach, based on visual assessment and oral interviews, due to a previously-identified lack of pre-1960 municipal records in the city of Buchanan.<sup>1</sup>

The resulting “windshield survey” of the entire survey area evaluated the architectural significance and integrity of Buchanan’s residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhoods. The team used their understanding of the age, function, and significance of neighborhoods and specific properties based on initial research, along with the architectural styles, materials, and setting to evaluate potential historic resources. All potential historic resources were assessed according to National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria as individual resources, or as resources potentially contributing to a district.

Photographs were taken to document individual resources, representative resources within potential districts, and streetscapes depicting the greater context of potential districts. These photographs help to convey a sense of time and place as well as architectural or landscape patterns in a potential district.

Based on the results of the survey and background research, the project team identified those individual properties and historic districts that warrant intensive study to determine their potential for NRHP eligibility. Suggested boundaries are based on the survey and research results, but may be altered upon further investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, 7:3-4.

## 6. Data Location

Additional copies of this Survey Report, along with copies of all digital photography and inventory forms, are located at the following repositories:

Michigan Historic Preservation Network  
107 E Grand River Ave.  
Lansing, MI 48906

Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office  
702 W Kalamazoo St.  
Lansing, MI 48909

Buchanan District Library, Local History Room  
128 E Front St.  
Buchanan, MI 49107

McGeen and Boscarino, Architectural Historians  
5023 Commonwealth St.  
Detroit, MI 48208

## 7. Evaluation Results

### Potential Historic Resources

The following resources were identified as likely to meet National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria and warranting further, intensive-level research.

#### Bainton/Gimlin House

The Bainton/Gimlin House, located at 413 East Front Street to the east of the Clark Equipment Company complex, demonstrates a potential for National Register eligibility.

This English Arts and Crafts-style residence is situated prominently on a gentle hill that rises to the east of downtown Buchanan. It sits on a brick foundation, and siding materials consist of wooden clapboard siding on the first floor, coursed wooden shingles on the second floor, and stucco and decorative half-timbering on the attic story. Windows appear to be original, multi-light sash.

To the rear of the property, a gambrel-roofed barn or carriage house appears to have been converted into a garage in recent years with the addition of modern, segmented garage doors.

According to local tradition, this house was built and originally occupied by a son of William Bainton, a miller who created Buchanan's original millrace and constructed

many of the town's first mills, including the original Bainton Mill, now Pears Mill.<sup>2 3</sup> This, however, may provide difficult to verify due to an absence of pre-1960 municipal records and pre-1938 city directories.<sup>4</sup> In 1938 A. B. Gimlin owned the house.<sup>5</sup>

Further study is needed to determine the Bainton/Gimlin House's potential for NRHP eligibility. The building appears to retain an exceptional degree of historic integrity. If the house is associated with the Bainton family, then it is significant to Buchanan's pre-industrial development. Deed research is recommended to verify Bainton ownership and establish a period of significance.

### **Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant**

The Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant powerhouse, completed in 1903, is a large, multistory, cross-gabled, utility building with a pitched roof and exaggerated eaves. The red brick building sits on a massive concrete foundation in the St. Joseph River near its eastern shore. Notable features of the powerhouse include massive, multistory bays distinguished by brick pillars that span the east and west elevations. Most of the bays contain segmental-arched, brick window openings and fixed, steel-sashed windows.

The dam itself is made of concrete and spans the river southeast of the powerhouse building. Additional research is recommended to determine the dam's date of construction. A large area containing transformers and other electrical infrastructure is located immediately west of the powerhouse.

Local newspaper publisher John Holmes campaigned for over thirteen years to bring hydroelectric power to Buchanan. While the region suffered from a declining timber industry, Holmes campaigned on the premise that Buchanan could surpass nearby towns economically by damming the river and generating electric power.<sup>6</sup> Holmes and business partner Peter English owned a firm that, in 1893, was in the process of platting an addition to the village (now Holmes and English addition). The pair orchestrated an enlargement of their firm that became Buchanan Power and Electric Company. They borrowed against all of their assets to construct a wooden dam across the St. Joseph River and a small powerhouse on its eastern shore. Construction completed in late 1893.

Unfortunately for Holmes and English, the long campaign, coupled with the impact of the Panic of 1893, left the two men bankrupt. Mortgage holder Fred Lee of Dowagiac acquired the property. Later that year, Lee and his partner Henry Porter relocated their

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Ryman, personal interview.

<sup>3</sup> Stevens, 21-22.

<sup>4</sup> Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, 7:3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Buchanan City Directory, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Spencer, 53.

recently-formed Lee & Porter Axle Company to a site just above the dam. In 1900, Lee sold the dam to Charles A. Chapin: he reserved the two acres his factory sat on and a share of the power generated for his company's use. For over a decade, the Lee & Porter Axle Company was Buchanan's largest employer. They grew from 40 employees in 1895 to between 130 and 150 in 1912.<sup>7</sup>

As the demand on the region's power supply grew, the modest wooden dam and hydroelectric plant proved insufficient. In 1903, the present, Renaissance Revival-style, powerhouse replaced the earlier structure. Three years later, in 1905, the original wooden dam washed away. Chapin replaced it with a stone and concrete structure.

The Indiana & Michigan Electric Company acquired the Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant in approximately 1910. The company operated four hydroelectric plants along the St. Joseph River at Elkhart Illinois (1913), Twin Branch (c. 1904), Berrien Springs (1908), and Buchanan. Although the Buchanan hydroelectric plant's original components were replaced soon after their construction, the plant appears to be the first constructed on the St. Joseph River. American Electric Power, the parent company of Indiana Michigan Power (formerly Indiana & Michigan Electric Company) currently operates the plant.

The Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant is significant to the development of hydroelectric power on the St. Joseph River. The facility drew early industrial operations, including the Lee & Porter Axle Company to Buchanan in a time when most of the region suffered from an economic depression. Constructed in 1902 to replace an 1893 structure, the Renaissance Revival style powerhouse represents a typical utility-type building from that era. Furthermore, it appears to retain historic integrity. The Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant appears to meet NRHP eligibility requirements.

### **Claremont Street Survey Area**

This residential area, located in Buchanan's southeasternmost corner, includes the entire two-block length of Claremont Street from Rynearson Road south to Carroll Street. The area is composed largely of ranch-style homes constructed in the postwar period. Many homes display the irregular floor plans, overhanging eaves, and broad picture windows typical of high-style ranch homes, while others are more modest in design. Red and orange brick and simulated masonry are common siding types.

Development in this area, east of the Liberty Heights subdivision, began in 1940 and continued after World War II.<sup>8</sup> While ranch-style homes are common in Buchanan and illustrate that city's continued growth in the 1940s and 1950s, a particular concentration

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<sup>7</sup> Goodsell and Myers, 159.

<sup>8</sup> French, 76.

of that style is evident on Claremont Street, and these examples display a high degree of architectural integrity.

The H. C. Stark Elementary School is also located on Claremont Street. This International-style building was designed by H. W. Van Dongen of Benton Harbor and completed in 1959.<sup>9</sup>

The Claremont Street Survey Area is representative of Buchanan's immediate pre- and post- World War II residential development. The high concentration of ranch-style houses and the International-style school building distinguish the area from other areas in Buchanan with similar development periods. Additional research and an intensive-level survey are recommended to determine this survey area's NRHP eligibility and the extent of its historic integrity.

### **Clark Equipment Company Survey Area**

This area includes a number of industrial buildings constructed by Clark Equipment Company northeast of Buchanan's downtown area and in close proximity to McCoy's Creek. This potentially National Register-eligible historic district includes Clark Equipment Company administrative and production facilities bounded by Front Street, Dewey Street, and Redbud Trail, as well as several industrial buildings located along River Street and Third Street.

The most significant Clark buildings are clustered on the southwest end of the site, near the intersection of Front Street and Redbud Trail, and closest to downtown. These are centered around a reservoir created c. 1910 and include an administration and axle production building (1907), a Streamline-style laboratory building (date not known), a guard house (c. 1907), and two small structures which appear to be pump houses or other utility buildings. This cluster of buildings also includes an International style (c. 1965) Clark office building, located at 302 N Redbud Trail, which now houses Buchanan City Hall.<sup>10</sup>

Additional Clark buildings are located along McCoy's Creek to the northeast. Some of these buildings are vacant and in a state of moderate disrepair, while others have been converted to other industrial uses; consequently, all have a diminished degree of architectural integrity. These include a c.1920-c.1930 monitor-roofed machine shop fronting on River Street<sup>11</sup>, a gable-roofed shop located behind (to the south of) the machine shop, along with an axle housing plant (c. 1947) that is presently undergoing demolition. Further east along McCoy's creek are more recent buildings: "Building 57"

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<sup>9</sup> Goodsell and Myers, 217.

<sup>10</sup> Construction dates and other historic context provided by author's personal interview with Donald Ryman.

<sup>11</sup> Sanborn Map Company, 1934.

(constructed in 1957), a large manufacturing facility presently owned and operated by Bosch Rexroth Group, and a c. 1970 Clark research and development building that is likely to be non-contributing to a potential National Register district.

All extant Clark Equipment Company buildings are constructed of light-colored concrete brick or block, feature ample window openings, and tend to be surrounded by broad, landscaped lawns. Donald Ryman, an employee of Clark from 1957 to 1990, attributes this to principal E. B. Clark's desire to create an architecturally exceptional corporate campus that would contribute to employee morale and a sense of civic pride. Consequently, any intensive-level survey should evaluate the survey area, as a whole, from a designed landscape perspective.

Clark Equipment Company's predecessor, the George R. Rich Company (later known as the Celfor Tool Company) began in a smaller building located downtown. In 1906, the company acquired this land to the northeast, along McCoy's Creek, in an arrangement in which the village subsidized the construction of the company's first new building.<sup>12</sup> The Celfor Tool Company merged in 1916 with the Buchanan Electric Steel Company to form the Clark Equipment Company.

Clark discontinued much of its Buchanan manufacturing in the 1980s and moved out of the city entirely in the early 1990s. Some of the buildings have been adapted to other uses, while others are vacant or have been demolished. Nonetheless, the remaining buildings retain a degree of architectural integrity that ranges from moderate to high, and fundamental relationships to the landscape remain intact. While this survey area covers a relatively large area, the exact boundaries of an eventual NRHP historic district may be reduced somewhat as individual buildings are evaluated for architectural integrity and degree of historic significance. The determination of a period of significance is also likely to exclude some buildings from a NRHP district.

### **Electro-Voice Factory**

Located in Buchanan's southeast corner at the eastern end of Cecil Street and bounded by Liberty Street on the east and Railroad Street on the south, the Electro-Voice factory is a large, L-shaped, brick and concrete block industrial building consisting of multiple additions. The building's flat-roofed northern end features Moderne-style elements including rounded corners, a recessed entrance, and narrow bands of steel-framed, double-hung windows. The remainder of the building features concrete block construction and has little-to-no ornamentation. A monitor roof distinguishes the westernmost section of the building.

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<sup>12</sup> French, 20.

Electro-Voice became one of postwar Buchanan's most significant companies, second only to the Clark Equipment Company. Al Kahn and Lou Burroughs founded Electro-Voice in South Bend, Indiana in 1930. The pair had previously worked together repairing receivers. Notre Dame football coach, Knute Rockne coined the company's name when he purchased a portable public address system from Kahn and Burroughs to use on the football field. Rockne called the system his "Electric Voice."<sup>13</sup>

Electro-Voice remained in South Bend until 1946, where they the company made a name for itself manufacturing audio equipment for the military during World War II. The company moved to a factory formerly occupied by an early dry-cleaning facility on Cecil Street in Buchanan in 1946. There, Electro-Voice expanded its market from microphones to electric organs, amplifiers, and other audio components. By 1959, Electro-Voice employed over 1,000 people.<sup>14</sup> The facility was expanded twice during that decade, once in the mid-1950s, and again in 1959. In 1963, the company's 643 Cardiline shotgun model microphone won an Academy Award, the first ever given for an audio product. In 1967, Kahn and Burroughs sold Electro-Voice to Gulton Industries. The company changed hands again in the 1980s when Mark IV Industries acquired it. Telex, who acquired Mark IV in 1999, transferred Electro-Voice's (now EV-International, Inc.) remaining Buchanan operations to Minneapolis in the early 2000s. The Environmental Protection Agency declared the Cecil Street factory a Superfund Site in 1999.

Electro-Voice was a significant employer in Buchanan after World War II. Its presence influenced the post-war housing boom that resulted in much of the city's current housing stock. The factory building itself does not appear to be architecturally significant. Further study is recommended to assess the Electro-Voice factory's NRHP eligibility as an important component of Buchanan's post-World War II development.

The recommended boundary for further study includes the entire parcel on which the Electro-Voice factory is located. Intensive-level study should identify construction dates for the factory's numerous additions, as well as determine a period of significance (with a specific end date) for the factory as a whole.

### **Liberty Heights Survey Area**

The Liberty Heights Survey Area is located in the City of Buchanan's southeast corner. The area is bounded by Rynearson Street on the north, Liberty Street on the east, Jordan and Sylvan streets on the south, and Sylvan Street on the west. This residential neighborhood contains a variety of single-family houses along the north-south streets of Liberty, Cecil, and Sylvan, and the east-west streets of Rynearson, Chicago, Smith,

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<sup>13</sup> Goodsell and Meyers, 160.

<sup>14</sup> Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, 8-9.



Jordan, and Sylvan. The area features paved streets and sidewalks, an abundant tree canopy and well-maintained, moderately-sized front lawns.

The survey area's blocks located north of Smith Street, contain architectural types ranging from two- and three-story bungalow, American Foursquare, and gable-front houses to the occasional single-story ranch and Cape Cod house. The most represented styles are Craftsman and Colonial Revival. Common materials include brick and wood cladding with concrete foundations and shingle roofs. Most houses feature pitched roofs, overhanging eaves, and large front porches. Some buildings have modern replacement materials such as aluminum or vinyl siding and windows. The survey area's blocks located south of Smith Street contain primarily modest, single-story ranch and Cape Cod-type houses. Ranch houses feature low, elongated massing with large picture windows and an attached garage. Cape Cods feature steeply-pitched roofs, proportional facades, and prominent paired dormers. The most common materials are brick, aluminum or vinyl siding, asphalt shingles, and aluminum or vinyl windows.

During World War I, Buchanan's largest employer, Clark Equipment Company underwent an aggressive expansion in order to meet the demands of the United States military effort. Ill-equipped to handle the influx of new residents, Buchanan faced an immediate housing shortage. In response, Clark formed the Buchanan Land Company in 1918. The company subsequently purchased a farm just outside the village's southeast boundary, south of Rynearson Street.<sup>15</sup> By 1934, the company had constructed 56 single-family houses between Rynearson and Smith streets, ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,500. The houses represent a variety of architectural styles popular at the time. The remainder of these blocks and the blocks south of Smith Street developed during the post- World War II housing boom.

The Liberty Heights Subdivision is a good example of an early-twentieth century, company-planned subdivision that was constructed specifically to house factory workers and their families. It is Buchanan's only example of factory worker housing from the World War I era. The survey area is also significant for its intact collection of early-twentieth century bungalow and gable-front single-family houses. Furthermore, the area appears to retain a high level of historic integrity, despite occasional intrusions dating to the 1940s or 1950s.

An intensive-level survey is recommended to identify any additional associations and to determine contributing and non-contributing resources. While the most probable boundary for this area appears to be Rynearson Street on the north, Liberty Street on the east, Smith Street on the south, and Sylvan Street on the west, the inclusion of the blocks south of Smith Street may be deemed appropriate upon further study. Reconnaissance-

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<sup>15</sup> Goodsell and Myers, 100.

level survey did not reveal the exact boundaries of the Buchanan Land Company's original land purchase. Continued research is recommended to identify the boundaries of this tract, identify which individual buildings were built by the Buchanan Land Company, and explore the relationship (if any) between houses built by the Buchanan Land Company and other buildings within the survey area.

While the housing stock indicates a clearly differentiated development period, the larger boundaries may be a significant representation of the pattern of workers' housing developments in Buchanan.

### **Oak Ridge Cemetery Survey Area**

The 45-acre Oak Ridge Cemetery is situated on a rectangular parcel on the city's west side, bounded by West Front Street on the north, Roe and Hillview streets on the east, Terre Coupe Street on the south, and properties along Post Road on the west. The cemetery follows a modest Landscape-Lawn type plan characterized by long, paved vistas and open green spaces that are purposefully framed by large trees or other vegetation. Clusters of trees and shrubbery on the cemetery's west side create a canopy that shades the generally older and larger monuments located within that section. The canopy offsets the notably more open space known as "Potters Field" that makes up the east section. The main entrance, located along West Front Street, features newly-constructed concrete and stone pillars topped by an iron arch containing the cemetery's name.

Notable monuments within the cemetery include the "Knight's Chapel," constructed c. 1945 for Jack "Sky" Knight, an aviation pioneer from Buchanan who demonstrated the feasibility of transcontinental airmail in 1921, and the Civil War Memorial area, located immediately inside the front entrance. The area contains a Civil War cannon that was originally on board the U.S.S. *Lodona*. The memorial cannon was dedicated in 1898.<sup>16</sup> Corporal James Callaghan willed the Civil War Soldier statue upon his death in 1888: the statue was dedicated in 1901. Other large monuments, including two crypts bearing the names, "Colvin" and "Steve and Mary Rudini," respectively, carry modest classical or Gothic style elements typical of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cemeteries. A variety of other grave markers consist of small- or medium-sized monuments, monolith-type headstones, or flush markers with minimal ornamentation.

Founded in 1868 and still accepting burials today, Oak Ridge Cemetery's grave markers, landscaping, and plan reflect the typical artistic funerary values that span its history. Although modest in size and absent of truly high-style funerary architecture, the cemetery is a good example of a small, Landscape-Lawn type cemetery that reflects Buchanan's

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<sup>16</sup> Friends of Oak Ridge Cemetery, 2012.

development. Further research is recommended to determine the breadth of these and any additional associations and to assess Oak Ridge Cemetery's historic integrity.

The boundaries of the survey area include the entire parcel the cemetery encompasses.

### **Redbud-Days-Oak Survey Area**

This area is primarily residential in character and extends southward from the National Register-listed Downtown Buchanan Historic District, terminating at the railroad tracks at the southern border of the city. This potentially National Register-eligible historic district includes most of the north-south aligned- Berrien Street, Redbud Trail, Days Avenue, and Oak Street, as well as east-west cross streets extending as far west as Clark Street.

Based on an inventory of architectural styles, buildings in this area appear to have construction dates ranging from the 1850s to the 1930s, with the vast majority constructed between c. 1890 and c. 1920. Architectural styles and house forms include a small number of Greek Revival examples, with larger numbers of Queen Anne-influenced, gable-front and gabled ell forms and American foursquare. Textured concrete block is commonly used in foundations and porch supports. Architectural integrity ranges from moderate to high: many buildings feature apparently original wood siding and windows, while others are clad in mid-20th century replacement materials including asphalt and asbestos. A minority of buildings feature modern siding materials such as aluminum and vinyl, as well as vinyl replacement windows. Additions and demolitions are uncommon, and infill construction beyond a potential c. 1850-c.1920 period of significance is extremely uncommon. The residential area also includes historically-significant landscape features such as retaining walls and concrete steps.

While the earliest development in Buchanan centered alongside and northwest of McCoy's Creek, this later, southward expansion was likely prompted by the completion of the Michigan Central Railroad in 1849.<sup>17</sup> The line was located approximately one half-mile south of the center of town, likely for topographical reasons, to avoid a descent into the depression created by McCoy's Creek.

This potential historic district also contains several small industrial buildings, including the National Register-listed Zinc Collar Pad Company, a planing mill at 403 S. Oak Street, and a Clark Equipment Company vehicle garage at 206 Days Avenue.<sup>18</sup> These buildings tend to be located near McCoy's Creek where they, or their predecessors, likely were sited to take advantage of the creek's potential for water power.

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<sup>17</sup> Goodsell and Meyers, 131.

<sup>18</sup> Sanborn Map Company, 1936.

Additional research and an intensive-level survey is recommended to identify any additional associations, determine appropriate boundaries, and determine the level of integrity retained.

### **Areas That Do Not Warrant Further Study**

Much of the city of Buchanan contains buildings and structures that are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

In the southeastern portion of the city, McCoy's Creek winds through undeveloped wetlands and grassland. Post Street and portions of Terre Coupe Road are dominated by a newly-constructed industrial park. Northwestern Buchanan, in the vicinity of Fourth Street, Ottawa Court, and Middleton Court, contains agricultural fields and new residential construction.

Houses from the mid-twentieth century dominate on the western side of Buchanan in the vicinity of Terre Coupe Road, Polis Street, Hillview Street, and Colonial Street, and most of the city north of River Street, and include a number of small Cape Cod and ranch-style homes. However, examples that retain a high degree of historic integrity do not exist in significant concentrations. Mid-twentieth century commercial buildings exist on North Redbud Trail and East Front Street, but these do not appear to meet National Register of Historic Places criteria.

From the start, resources that were already listed on the National Register of Historic Places (The Union Block Building, the Buchanan Downtown Historic District, the Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, and the Zinc Collar Pad Company) were excluded from the survey area.

## **8. Descriptive Overview**

The city of Buchanan is a small manufacturing community with a population of 4,456 according to the 2010 Census. The city is located southwest of an oxbow in the St. Joseph River in southwest Michigan, near the Indiana border. With the exception of the City of Niles, located five miles to the east, the surrounding region contains primarily rural, agricultural land with flat or slightly rolling topography.

The survey area includes the approximately two-mile area of the city of Buchanan, roughly bounded by the St. Joseph River on the north and east, Bakerstown Road on the West, the Norfolk Southern Railroad on the south, and Shirmer Parkway on the east. The survey area does not include areas within the National Register- listed Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods National Register District and the Buchanan Downtown National Register District. These already designated districts constitute approximately 172 acres of residential and commercial land uses in and surrounding the downtown. The survey area's northern boundary is characterized by a small amount of farmland and fields leading to lightly wooded areas along the river. The southern boundary features a

large conservation area that includes McCoy's Creek and extends along the railroad tracks. The majority of the remaining survey area is residential with the exception of a large industrial area in southwest Buchanan, and a smaller industrial area in east Buchanan. Small, modern commercial corridors are located along E. Front Street and Redbud Trail. Most of the residential areas outside of the Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District contain modest, post- World War II ranch or Cape Cod type houses. The area southeast of the historic district also contains some late-nineteenth and early-twentieth houses representing a variety of styles and types.

## **9. Historic Overview**

### **Summary History**

Buchanan began as a mill town in 1833, when Charles Cowes established a shingle mill on the banks of the St. Joseph River and McCoy's Creek. The prime location and abundance of resources attracted like-minded settlers, who soon established the village of Buchanan as a bustling town that supported a strong agricultural base and a variety of grist, flour, and saw mills. By 1860, the region's timber industry began to dominate the economic climate as dozens of furniture and tool manufacturers took advantage of the abundance of hard timber and the proximity to two important transportation routes: the St. Joseph River, and a new Michigan Central Railroad line. The residential and commercial buildings in and nearest to Buchanan's downtown reflect the development patterns and architectural styles typical of the era in Michigan's small towns.

Despite this rapid growth, by 1890 the timber industry had substantially depleted the region's forests, leaving single-industry towns like Buchanan with no economic base. In 1893, the impact to Buchanan was relieved by the construction of what may have been the St. Joseph River's first hydroelectric dam and power plant. Buchanan was soon supplying power to nearby towns and supporting its own growing manufacturing base. During the early twentieth century Buchanan's population grew rapidly, due largely to the success of the Clark Equipment Company. Clark was the city's largest employer for most of the twentieth century. The tool manufacturer's presence in Buchanan between 1904 and the early 1980s directly influenced nearly all aspects of the city's twentieth-century history. The commercial, residential, and industrial architectural development correlates directly to the Clark Equipment Company's periods of growth. Generally these developments occurred during and immediately after World War I, after World War II, and throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

### **Thematic Narrative**

#### **Settlement and early development**

The Reverend Isaac McCoy established Carey Mission near present-day Niles in 1823. Buchanan's first settlers were associated with that mission. In 1833, former Carey Mission employee, Charles Cowles of Vermont settled at McCoy's Creek on the banks of the St. Joseph River. McCoy's creek was named for Isaac McCoy who considered it a

favorite fishing spot. Cowles established the first of thirteen mills along the creek that together, came to define a small town's identity for over half a century. Other earlier settlers include; Russell McCoy, who built a sawmill at the mouth of McCoy Creek; Charles Hatfield, who also constructed a sawmill; and Dr. Charles Wallin, who purchased Cowles land and established a grist mill.<sup>19</sup> Of the early mills, only Pears Mill, located within the Downtown Buchanan Historic District, still stands.

Between approximately 1834 and 1860, a modest commercial center developed around the mills. The Michigan State legislature officially recognized Buchanan Township in 1837. In 1843, John Hamilton, a grist mill owner, platted the small village – then known as “McCoy’s Creek,” with forty-three plots containing twelve buildings. Although not located on any major transportation routes early on, the village rapidly attracted residents by its proximity to the St. Joseph River and by the abundance of good farmland and timber nearby. By the 1840s, the river itself was being actively used for both freight and travel.

In 1849, the Michigan Central Railroad extended its tracks from Niles to New Buffalo, making a stop at Buchanan. The railroad helped push the small village of Buchanan into a booming manufacturing town. In addition, the depot, located along Railroad Street between Redbud Trail and Days Avenue (since demolished) influenced the development of residential areas immediately north along Redbud Trail, Days Avenue, and Oak Street and a grouping of early manufacturing and commercial buildings along Oak Street south of Smith Street.

### **The Wooden Age**

Between 1860 and 1890, Buchanan joined communities throughout southwest Michigan in the manufacture of wooden furniture, wagons, and tools.<sup>20</sup> By harnessing water power, and soon after, steam power, Buchanan manufacturers were able to take advantage of the region's abundance of hard woods like maple, oak, beech, and walnut to produce wooden products that they could then export via the railroad or the river. In 1883, according to Stevens, the village contained four furniture dealers, the Zinc Collar Pad Factory, two spring bed factories, a cabinet organ factory, two carriage factories, two wagon shops, a foundry, machine shop, six blacksmith shops, three harness shops, two cooper shops, and thirteen dressmaking establishments.

The Zinc Collar Pad Company, founded in 1870 by Dester Curtis, Henry Gilman, and George H. Richards, was pivotal to this era. The company manufactured a collar for work horses that treated sores on their necks caused by leather collars. It grew to be Buchanan's most successful manufacturer until the advent of automobiles, and

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<sup>19</sup> Coolidge, 213.

<sup>20</sup> Stevens, 49.



subsequent decrease in the use of draft and cart horses, depleted demand. The factory closed in 1925 but the building still stands: it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The village of Buchanan was incorporated in 1858, with 860 people. By 1890, the downtown was fully built out, and the majority of the residential areas platted to the north, east, and west of the downtown were developed. These areas are largely contained within the Downtown Buchanan Historic District and the North and West Neighborhoods Historic District. However, some residential development south of Front Street between Oak and Sylvan streets, as well as along River Street just southwest of the St. Joseph River also occurred at this time.

### **Electric Power and Industrial Development**

By the late 1880s, the region's timber industry had begun to decline. The unfettered growth of the furniture making industry in Buchanan and nearby towns depleted the timber supply and forced many local mills and manufacturers to close. Eager to forestall the impending loss of economic base, village residents began looking for other industries. In 1893, John Holmes and business partner, Peter English formed the Buchanan Power and Electric Company constructed a wooden dam across the St. Joseph River and a small powerhouse on its eastern shore.<sup>21</sup> A larger structure replaced the powerhouse in 1903.

The Lee & Porter Axle Company was the first to take advantage of the new power. Fred Lee of Dowagiac acquired the hydroelectric plant during bankruptcy proceedings in 1894. Later that year, Lee and his partner, Henry Porter relocated their recently-formed Lee & Porter Axle Company to a site just above the dam.<sup>22</sup>

The Lee & Porter Axle Company found global success in manufacturing carriage axles. The company retooled in 1909 when R.J. Burrows began to work on plans for automobile axles at the Buchanan plant. For the next four years, Lee & Porter grew to a budding early automobile parts manufacturer. As a precursor to modern machine shops, Lee & Porter initiated the shift to the automobile age in Buchanan. They employed between 130 and 150 employees in 1912, making it Buchanan's largest employer at the time.

The Lee & Porter Axle Company's newfound success was tragically short lived. On February 13, 1913, a fire destroyed the entire factory. The company was forced to sell off all unfulfilled contracts and was unable to rebuild.

### **Clark Equipment Company**

Despite the Lee & Porter Axle Company's early success, at the turn of the century, Buchanan was still reeling from the timber industry's decline. The local businessmen's

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<sup>21</sup> Stevens, 53.

<sup>22</sup> Goodsell and Myers, 160.



association advertised widely in an effort to entice manufacturing interests to the village. They offered low-cost electric power, low rent, and a strong labor force. In 1903, a Chicago drill maker answered the village's call. George Rich moved his small company, along with 28 employees from Chicago to a building on Main Street that once housed the Rough Wagon Works building. The company's product, the first twisted steel drill, revolutionized the drilling process.

Although initial sales were promising, the small company faced mounting debts and the threat of collapse. In 1904, Eugene B. Clark, an executive at Illinois Steel Company, took over operations (the Illinois Steel Company was Rich's largest customer).<sup>23</sup> The company thrived under Clark. Within a year, they relocated to a five-acre site provided by the village along McCoy's Creek, east of Portage Street (now Redbud Trail).

In 1907, the George R. Rich Company officially changed its name to the Celfor Tool Company. In 1910, Clark founded a second company, the Buchanan Electric Steel Company, to manufacture steel using electric furnaces. According to French, Clark was the first to implement this method in the United States.

During World War I, military contracts dominated both companies' production. In order to more efficiently fulfill the orders, the two companies merged in December 1916 to form the Clark Equipment Company.

Clark's production increased rapidly following the war, not only catapulting the company to be a world leader in the steel manufacturing industry, but transforming Buchanan into an industrial boom town. By 1918, Clark's payroll quadrupled to 800 employees, and in 1920 the village's population reached 3,187.<sup>24</sup>

The small town's housing stock could hardly accommodate such exponential growth. In 1918, to offset a severe housing shortage, Clark formed the Buchanan Land Company. Through it, they purchased acreage southwest of the village boundary along Niles-Buchanan Road. By 1934, the company had constructed fifty-six modest bungalow and American Foursquare-type houses that ranged from \$2,500 to \$4,500. The subdivision, dubbed "Liberty Heights," was located approximately along Sylvan, Cecil, and Liberty avenues south of Rynearson Street.

Clark continued to grow throughout the 1920s, positively impacting Buchanan's infrastructure development as it did. By the end of the decade, Clark employed nearly 1,300 people and wielded more power than anyone else in the community. As the village continued to struggle with housing shortages, the community began to push for stronger government. In August 1929, voters approved a city charter and Buchanan officially

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<sup>23</sup> French, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Stevens, 60.

organized as a city. Voters elected F.C. Hathaway, a Clark official, to be their first mayor.<sup>25</sup>

Although Clark suffered during the Depression, it managed to survive by temporarily cutting its workforce. For the employees who kept their jobs, the company made an effort to alleviate hardship by issuing more frequent, cash payments and other payroll practices. By the end of the decade, the company was able to rehire much of its workforce. In 1937, the employees unionized.

Clark and Buchanan experienced a full economic recovery during World War II. As Clark converted to war production, the company hired new workers faster than Buchanan could house them: Buchanan's population increased by 2,000 between 1944 and 1946. As Goodsell and Myers note, the city underwent a significant cultural change at this time.<sup>26</sup> Not only did Clark, like so many manufacturers, recruit en masse from southern states where a largely African American workforce was eager to find employment, but between two-thirds and three-fourths of Buchanan's population was engaged in industrial labor, mostly at Clark. Established residents had to cope with thousands of new residents from starkly different backgrounds, many of whom had nowhere to live.

If the housing crisis during World War I seemed problematic, the stress Buchanan felt during World War II was even greater. The local housing stock had deteriorated during the 1930s, and resources to construct new housing were almost nonexistent. The company undertook a small, and inadequate housing development east of Liberty Heights in 1940. They also established a temporary trailer encampment on North Portage Street. Between 1942 and 1944, the federal government awarded the city nearly 300 trailer units, ranging from small, single bedroom units, to slightly larger three or four-bedroom units.<sup>27</sup> The racially-segregated trailers were located primarily around Portage and Moccasin streets.

### **Postwar Development**

In 1945, the federal government eased building restrictions and allowed the development of 300 homes in the Niles and Buchanan area. This residential growth continued throughout the 1950s and 60s. Most of the city's available land, including the areas west of Chippewa Street, north of Fourth Street, north of Fulton Street, and south of Rynearson Road was built out with modest ranch- and Cape Cod-type houses during this period.

Housing was not the only aspect of community life Buchanan's residents were lacking after World War II. The city's school-aged population had grown by fifteen percent since

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<sup>25</sup> French, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Goodsell and Myers, 183.

<sup>27</sup> French, 77.

1940 and Buchanan's school system was not able to accommodate the influx. The school board constructed two new elementary schools after the war. Moccasin Elementary was completed in 1949. It is located within the Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District. H. C. Stark Elementary School, on Claremont Street in the city's southeast corner was completed in 1959. A third elementary school, Ottawa, was constructed on the city's west side in 1965.

Electro-Voice was one of postwar Buchanan's most significant companies. Al Kahn and Lou Burroughs founded the audio equipment manufacturer in 1930 in South Bend, Indiana. Electro-Voice remained in South Bend until 1946, when the company moved to a factory on Cecil Street in Buchanan. By 1959, Electro-Voice employed over 1,000 people.<sup>28</sup>

While the 1960s and 70s were productive decades for Buchanan's key industries, by the end of that era the economic climate had changed drastically. The community's relationship with Clark had been strained by labor unrest and a generally unstable political and economic climate nationally. Rumors that Clark was going to leave the city proliferated for years. Those rumors became reality in 1982 when the Clark Equipment Company moved its manufacturing operations outside of Michigan. Clark cited the uncommonly-high Michigan union labor rates, as well as declining demand as its reason for leaving. The company maintained its administrative headquarters and some manufacturing in Buchanan until the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Less than a decade later, Electro-Voice, which had since changed ownership several times, also transferred operations out of Buchanan. Together, these two departures devastated Buchanan residents. For Buchanan, the period of national economic decline that began in the 1970s continued into the 1980s and 90s with the loss of its most important employers.

Buchanan's built environment reflects the rise and decline of its predominant employers. Mid- and late-nineteenth century residential and commercial properties in and near the downtown are the result of an abundance of mills and the short but lucrative timber industry. These neighborhoods were infilled and expanded in the early twentieth century following the arrival of hydroelectric power. Development patterns throughout the remainder of the twentieth century followed the employment levels of the Clark Equipment Company. Peak eras of development occurred after World War I, when bungalow, English Cottage, and American Foursquare homes began to appear at the town's edges. After World War II, national postwar housing trends reached Buchanan as entire neighborhoods of ranch and Cape Cod- type houses developed. In recent years, modern subdivisions and a moderate degree of infill housing has begun to appear.

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<sup>28</sup> Buchanan North and West Neighborhoods Historic District, 8:9.

While the existing housing stock in some areas appears to be deteriorating more than in others, Buchanan's residential architecture remains overall intact. What remains of its historic commercial and industrial architecture however, is rapidly deteriorating. Recent demolitions, including that of several former Clark factory buildings, and the possibility of additional land clearance threatens Buchanan's historic built environment.

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## 11. Index of Potential Historic Resources

Name	Location/Boundary	Photo IDs
Bainton/Gimlin House	413 E. Front St.	1-2
Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant	St. Joseph River, along E. River Road	3-5
Claremont Street Survey Area	Claremont St. between Ryneerson Rd. and Carroll St.	6-8
Clark Equipment Company Survey Area	Roughly bounded by Front St., Dewey St., and Redbud Trail, and along River and Third streets	9-13
Electro-Voice Factory	603 Cecil St.	14-15
Liberty Heights Survey Area	Liberty, Cecil, Sylvan streets, between Ryneerson Rd. and Jordan St.	16-20
Oak Ridge Cemetery	Bounded by W. Front, Hillview, and Terre Coupe streets, and Post Rd.	21-24
Redbud – Days – Oak Survey Area	Redbud Trail, Days Ave, and Oak St. between E. Chicago and Railroad streets	25-30



## 12. Photographs

### Bainton/Gimlin House



1. View north to Bainton/Gimlin House facade



2. View northwest to Bainton/Gimlin House



### Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant



3. View southwest to Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant powerhouse



4. View northwest to Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant powerhouse





**5. View southeast to Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant dam**

**Claremont Street Survey Area**



**6. View south along Claremont Street**





**7. 311 Claremont Street**



**8. H.C. Stark Elementary School**



## Clark Equipment Company Survey Area



9. View southwest to Clark Equipment Company administration building



10. View northeast to south and west elevations of Clark Equipment Company administration building





**11. Clark Equipment Company guard house and utility building**



**12. East elevation of Clark Equipment Company laboratory building**





**13. View south from River Street to Clark Equipment Company building**

**Electro-Voice Factory**



**14. View west to Electro-Voice Factory facade**





15. View northwest to Electro-Voice Factory south elevation

### Liberty Heights Survey Area



16. 602 Rynearson Street





**17. 210 Cecil Street**



**18. View north along Cecil Street**





**19. 301 Liberty Street**



**20. View southeast along Rynearson Road**



## Oak Ridge Cemetery



21. View south to Oak Ridge Cemetery Gate

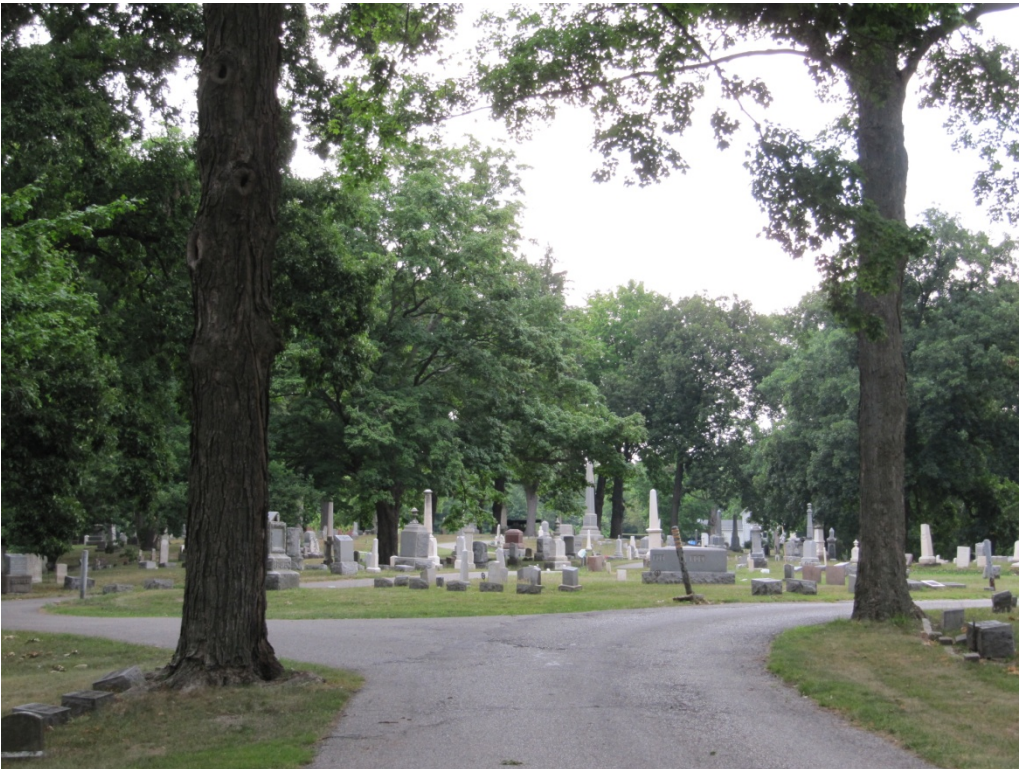


22. Oak Ridge Cemetery - Civil War cannon





**23. Oak Ridge Cemetery - Colvin Tomb**



**24. View north inside Oak Ridge Cemetery**



## Redbud – Days – Oak Survey Area



25. 108 and 110 Redbud Trail



26. 607 S. Oak Street





**27. View north along Days Avenue**



**28. 402 Berrien Street**





29. 402 Days Avenue

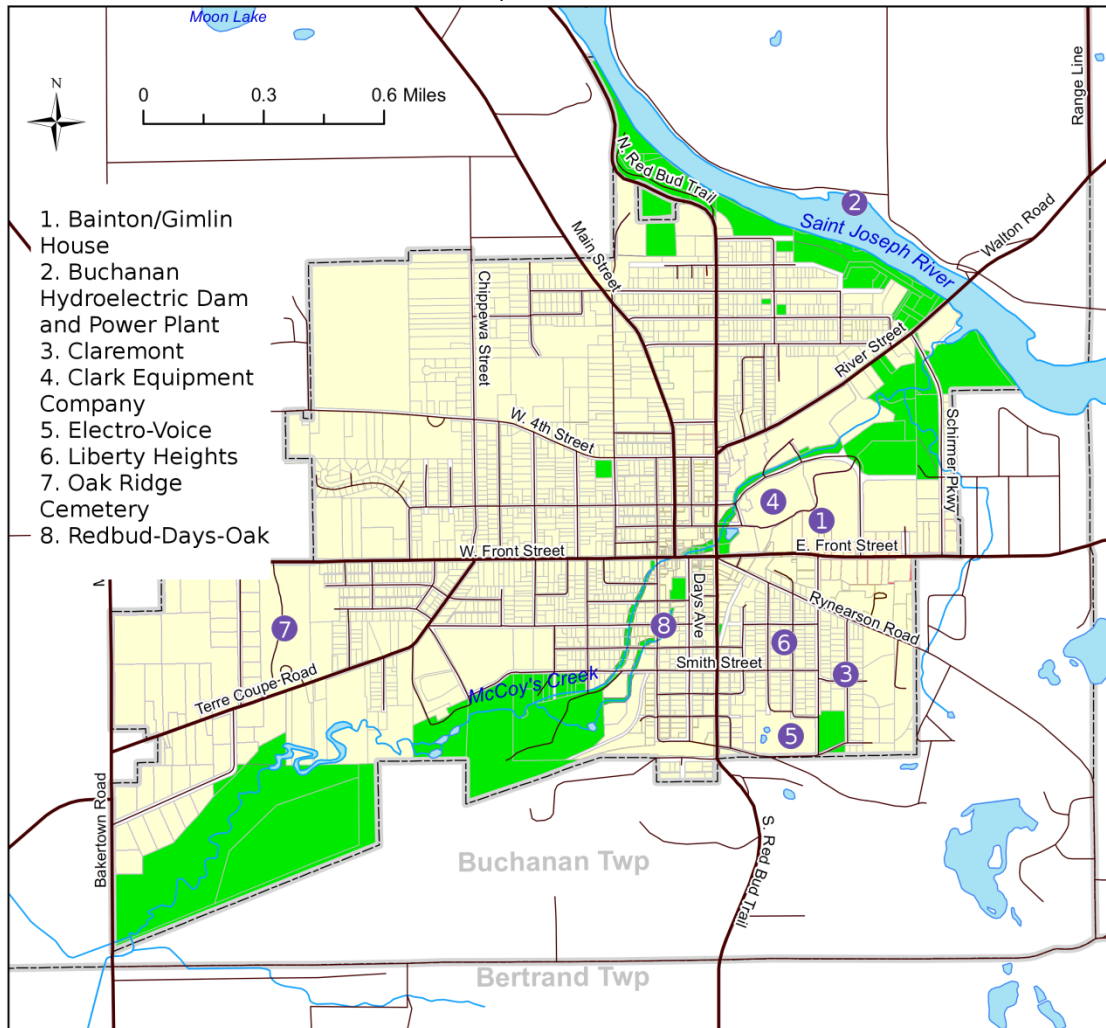


30. 403 S. Oak Street

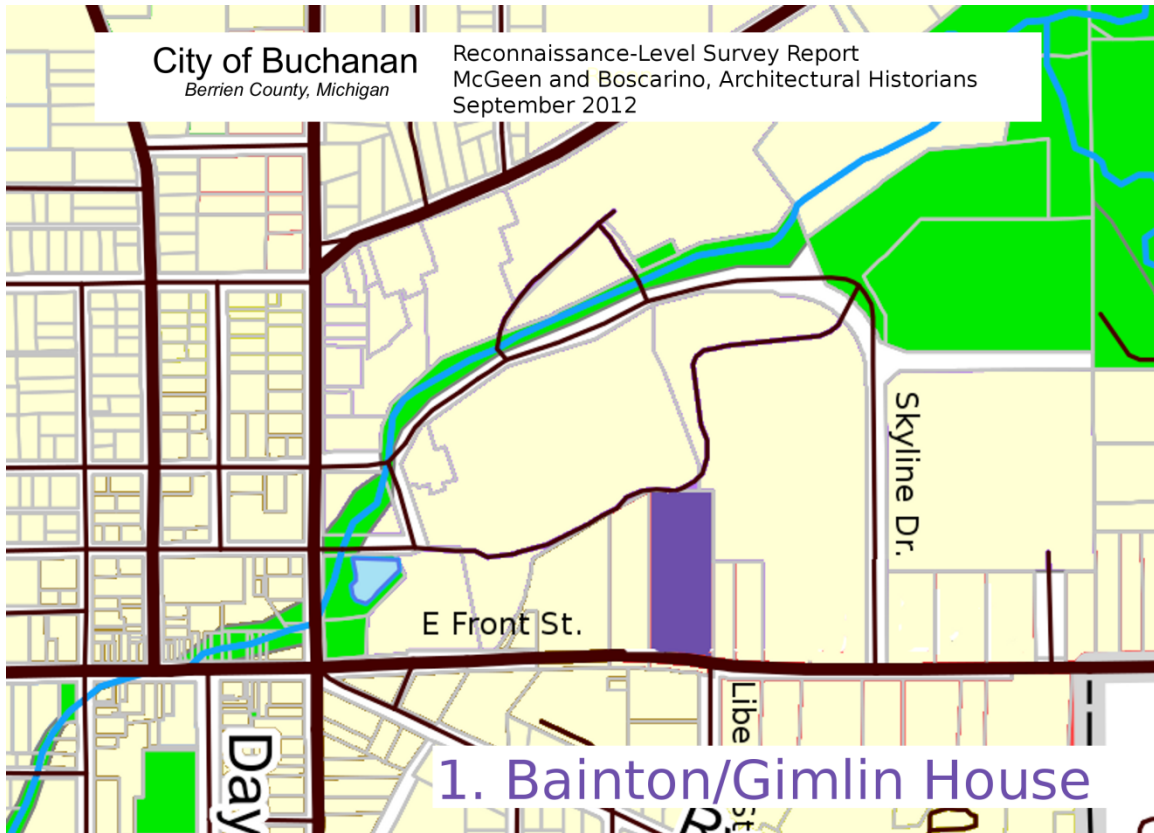
## 13. Maps

### City of Buchanan Berrien County, Michigan

Reconnaissance-Level Survey Report  
McGeen and Boscarino, Architectural Historians  
September 2012

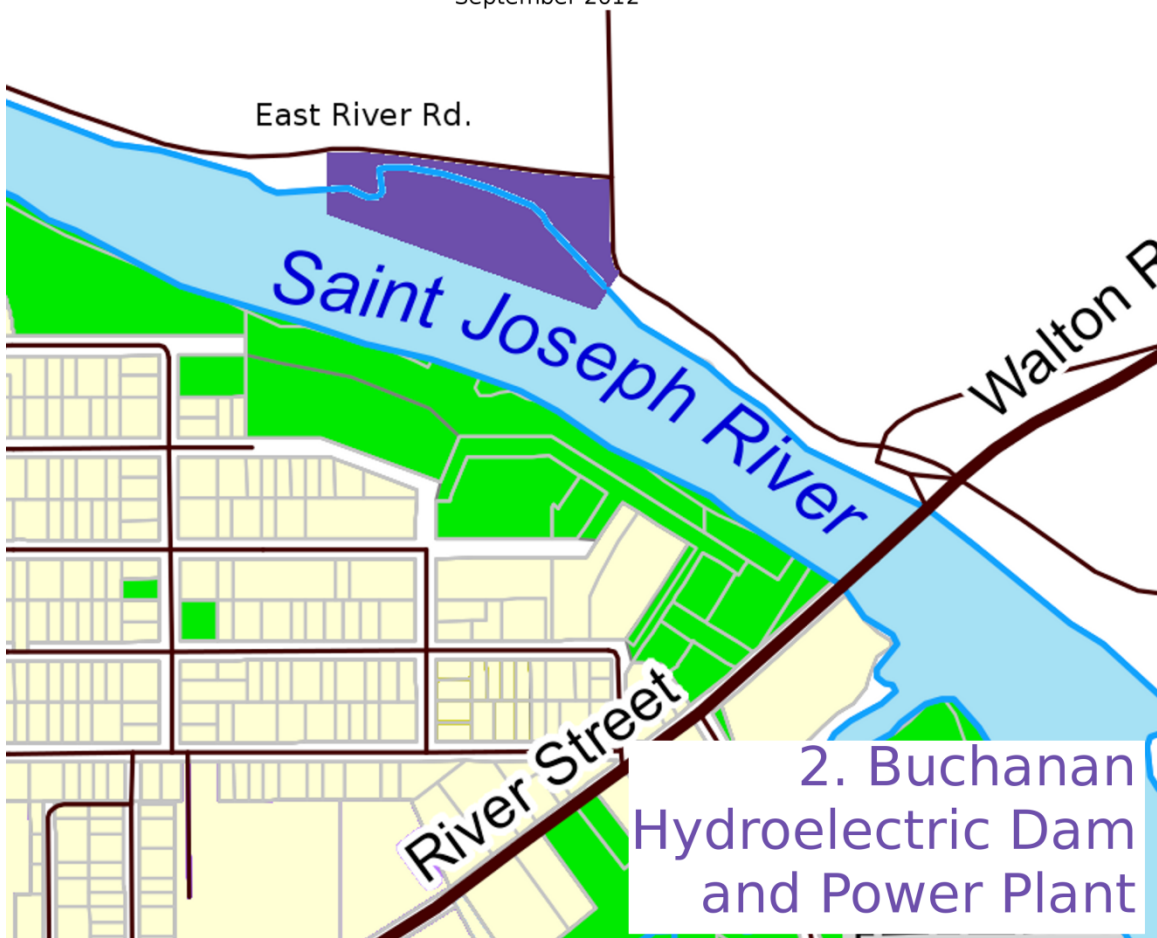




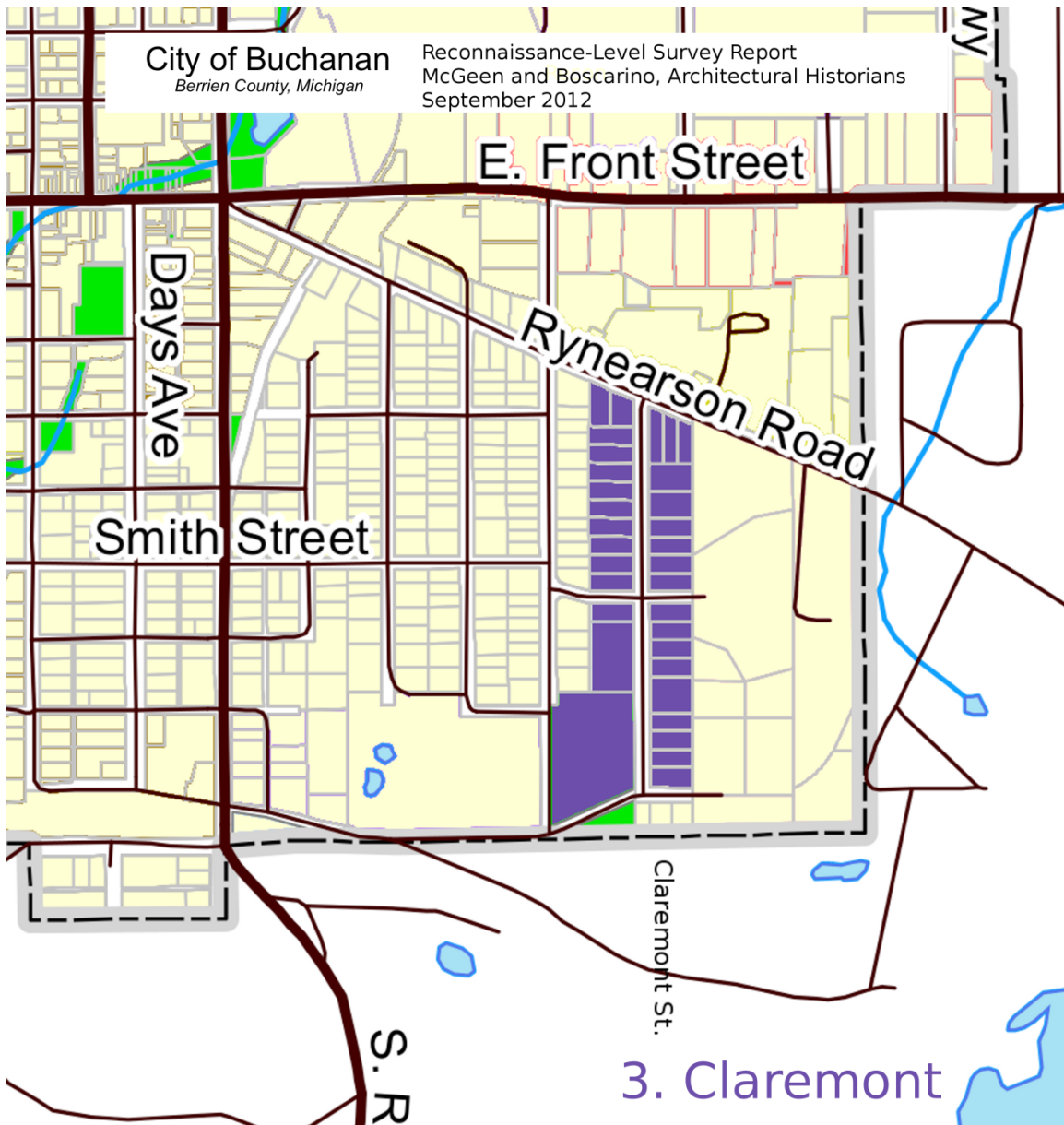


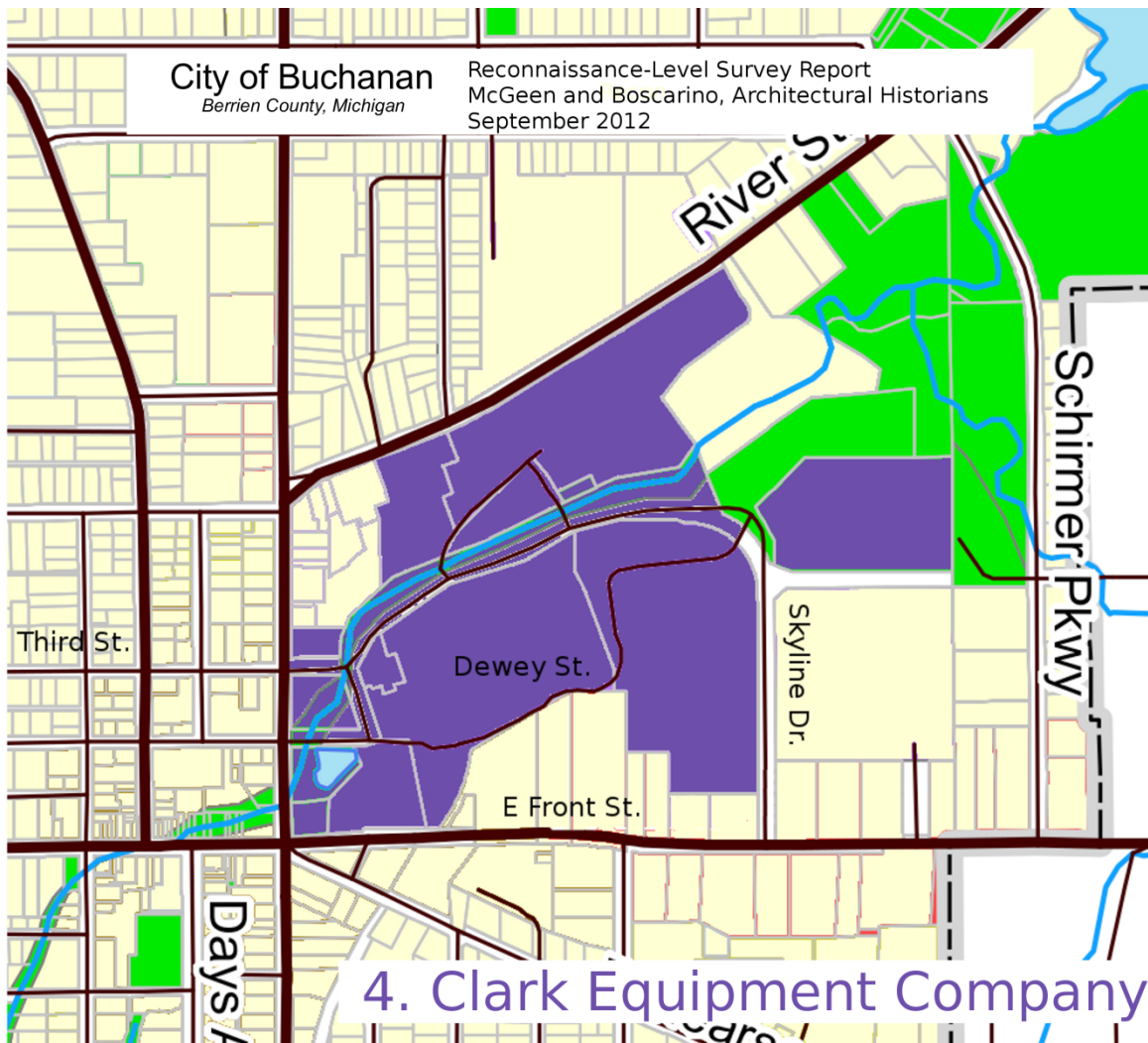
City of Buchanan  
Berrien County, Michigan

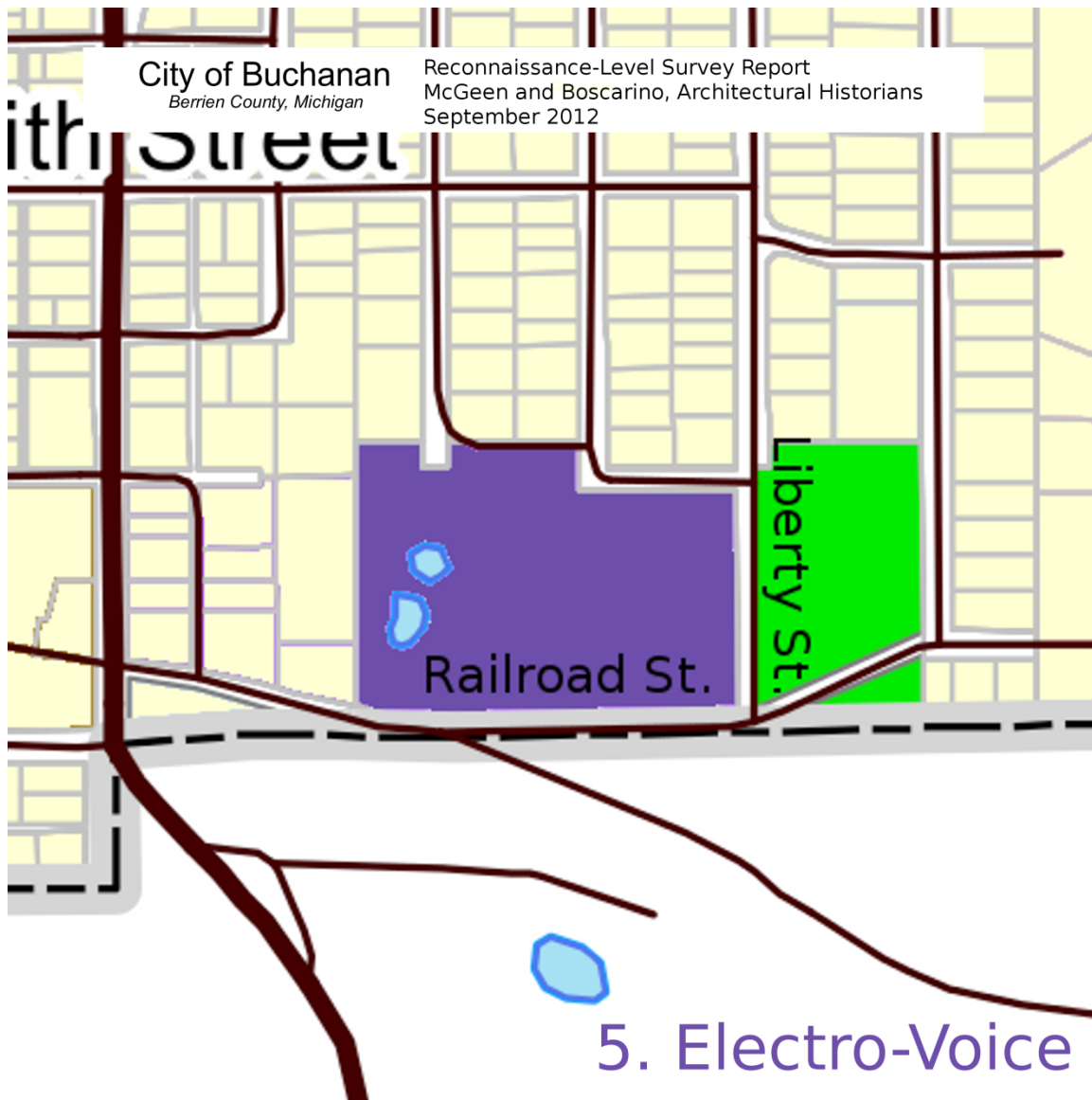
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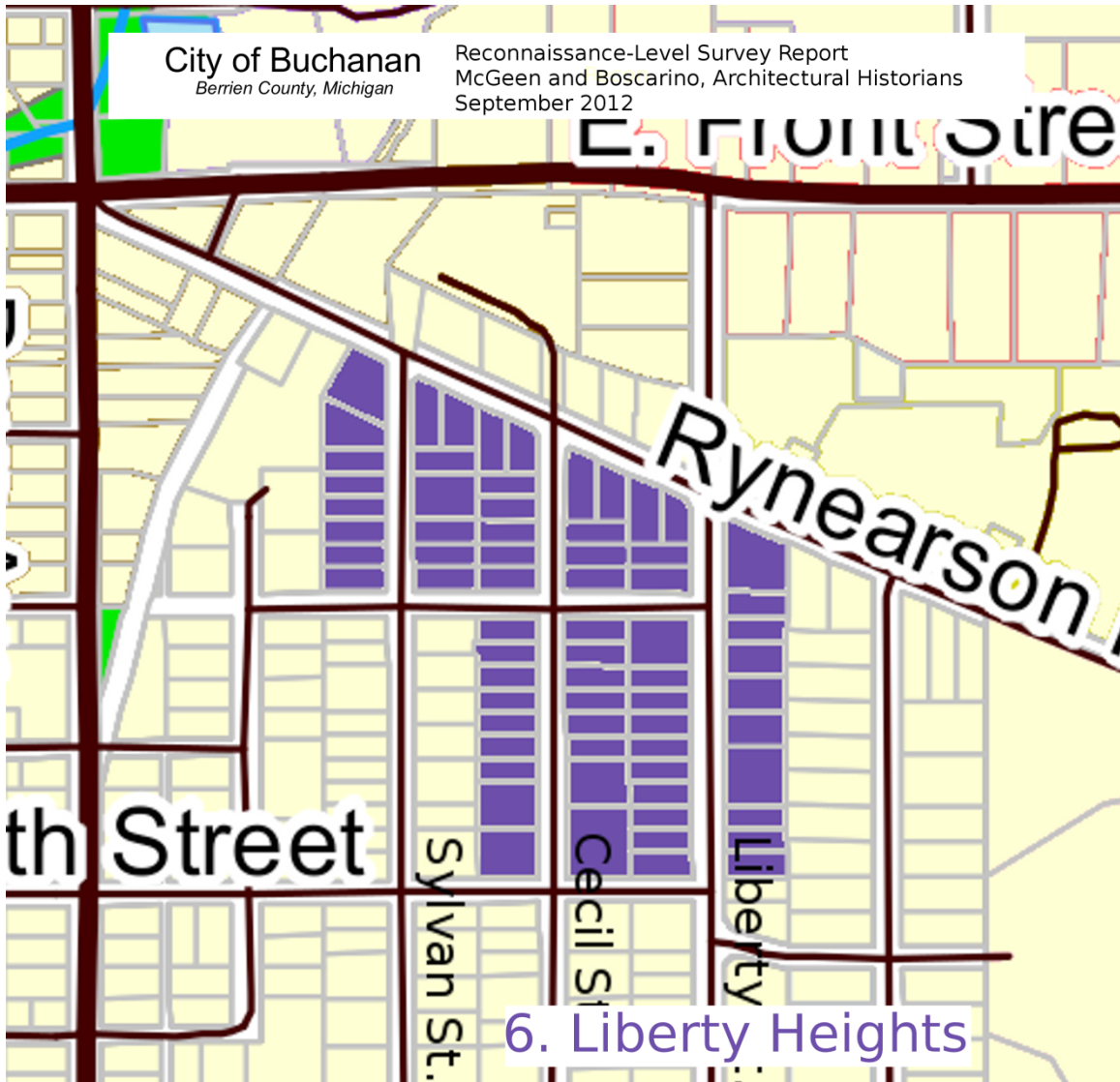


## 2. Buchanan Hydroelectric Dam and Power Plant









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