

**National Register of Historic Places
Evaluation/Return Sheet**

Property Name: Saugatuck Gap Filler Radar Annex
Property Address: 753 Park Street, Saugatuck, Allegan County

MISHPO Site #: P57652
MISHPO NR Project #: NR20-001

Return Comments Date: December 2, 2019

Nomination Summary

The Saugatuck Gap Filler Radar Annex was submitted for nomination under Criteria A and C in the areas of Military and Engineering at the national level of significance. The property served as a radar gap filler station during the Cold War, and was operational from 1956 until 1968, when the radar at Saugatuck was decommissioned. The property consists of two resources: one building and one radar tower.

Summary Reason for Return

The Saugatuck Gap Filler Radar Annex National Register of Historic Places nomination is being returned for technical and substantive issues. In sum, the nomination does not yet establish significance under Criterion A or Criterion C under the selected Areas of Significance, nor does the nomination text establish national level significance for the property. Please note that additional edits have been made in the registration form, included with this letter. Please work through the registration form and accept those edits, ask questions, or provide comments.

Section 1 – Historic Name

1. Please verify the historic name of the property. Was the site known as “Saugatuck Gap Filler Radar Annex” by the United States Air Force (USAF), or was that the colloquial name of the radar station? If the colloquial name, please use the official USAF name for the radar station.

Section 7 – Narrative Description

1. The Summary Paragraph should provide the location of the property and summarize its physical characteristics, including the character-defining features of the site and significant resources of the property. The Summary Paragraph should also include a summary of the property’s historical and architectural integrity. The Summary Paragraph should not be used as an introduction to the following Narrative Description, rather it is

meant to serve as an abstract that provides an overview of the physical characteristics of the property and that can stand on its own and convey to a reader the physical essence of the property.

2. In the Summary Paragraph please include some text that describes the building's form (i.e. L-shaped).
3. The Narrative Description provides a good amount of descriptive detail about the resources of the property, but required some reorganization. You will notice that subheadings have been put in place to provide organization of the text. We recommend the use of subheadings in the narrative text. Please review these sections and arrange those sections of text that are out of place. Some of the text in the new "Setting" section might be better placed in the subsequent "General Characteristics" section or the "Annex Building Exterior" section.
4. The Narrative Description should include a statement that addresses the property's historical and architectural integrity. Please see National Register Bulletin 16A for information regarding the seven aspects of integrity and how to assess those aspects.

Section 8 – Statement of Significance

1. The nomination suggests that the property is significant at the national level of significance. Please note that a nationally significant property will need historic context that is national in scope for the selected Areas of Significance. The property will also need to be compared to other, extant radar sites in the United States.
2. Please note that the development of a historic context is paramount. The National Register defines historic context as, "those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within prehistory or history is made clear." Without providing a context, the property cannot be evaluated. In terms of the National Register, context is comprised of three factors: theme, time, and place. These factors are represented in the Area(s) of Significance, Period of Significance, and Level of Significance.
3. The Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph must address the Period of Significance. It should state concisely why the dates of 1956 and 1969 were selected.
4. The nomination does not provide enough contextual history to evaluate and substantiate the historic significance of the radar station. The social, political, and military factors that led to the creation and implementation of the SAGE system should be expanded upon. The historic context should explain to the uninformed reader the "why" behind the development of the property. The nomination text mentions "the perception of an emerging Soviet threat." This should be explained in greater detail, and should address the "very real" and pervasive "sense of fear and helplessness" in the United States, as noted at the SAGE web page at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory's website.

It may be useful to keep in mind the idea of writing for future researchers who may be quite unfamiliar with the Cold War, the threat of communism, and prospect of nuclear war. While this does not mean that all aspects of the Cold War need to be discussed in

exhaustive detail, the Narrative Statement of Significance should provide an overview of the post-World War II era. The narrative text should also explain how the SAGE system fit into a larger North American defense system (e.g. CONAD, NORAD, Canada's Pinetree Line, the Distant Early Warning Line, and so on) and the threats it was meant to detect. The text should also describe in general terms that incredible number of bases, stations, and so forth that were constructed around the United States in the post-WWII years. There is some text that mentions these things, but the narrative must be more fully developed.

5. Please keep in mind that significance in terms of the National Register is never self-evident. Each Area of Significance, as well as the level and period of significance must be substantiated and a persuasive argument presented.
6. The text suggests the property is one of the most intact gap filler radar stations remaining in the country. Please provide a comparative analysis of the other intact stations and their level of completeness. If there are examples of partially complete stations, please discuss those. If it is known how many of the 131 gap filler stations were demolished, please include that information as well.
7. We recommend organizing the text in a "broadest" to "narrowest" manner so that the narrative text flows from the Cold War at the global scale, to the national scale, to its impact at the state level, and finally how the Cold War is reflected at the local level in Saugatuck.
8. In terms of a state-level view of the Cold War, the text need not discuss the entire breadth of Cold War-era military facilities constructed in Michigan, but it should context the growth in the number of Cold War facilities in the state to the aforementioned national trend and it should address the other radar and gap filler stations constructed in Michigan, and discuss the Saugatuck station in comparison to those.
9. Some documentation suggests that, at the time of acquisition of the property by the City of Saugatuck, the USAF and the city were somewhat at odds over what was to remain and what was to stay. If this is the case, this should be explained, as it provides information as to why the station is so intact.
10. The selection of Engineering is unclear. The Summary Paragraph addresses the property's military and architectural significance, but not engineering. Is the selection of Engineering meant to address the functional aspects of the FTS-1 radar, or is it meant to address the tower and radar apparatus in a construction sense?
11. The paragraph that addresses the architecture of the property does not provide enough information to justify significance in the area of Architecture. Under Criterion C, it is not enough to exemplify or be representative of a style or type or form of architecture, design, or engineering. The style, type, or form must be established as significant within a geographic area, and within a specified period, and the subject property must be evaluated against that historic context. We suggest reviewing any other nominations, historic contexts, or surveys that document Cold War era properties and using that information to establish the significance of the property type.
12. We recommend the use of subheadings to organize narrative text.

Section 10 – Geographical Data

1. The property boundary in the Verbal Boundary Description (VBD) will need to be described in a more precise manner. If the property has a legal description, we suggest using that. Additionally, if the full extent of the property includes land outside of the fenced area, that area should be included in the boundary description. The radar station appears to sit within two parcels. These parcels, as indicated on the Allegan County GIS website, depict a much larger property than what was noted on the sketch map and written in the VBD. Was the entirety of the two parcels originally held by the USAF?
2. The Boundary Justification should be revised to reflect those changes made to the VBD.

Other Issues

1. Please use footnotes for all citations, rather than endnotes.
2. Please be sure that the narrative text in the nomination conforms to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Style Guide found on the MISHPO National Register web page, www.michigan.gov/nrhp.

In closing, we appreciate the considerable effort expended to date to prepare a nomination for this significant property. Please do not interpret these comments and questions as a lack of support for the nomination. They are, instead, offered with the desire to assist in honing the document to make the best case for the property.

Please feel free at WalshT@michigan.gov or by telephone at (517) 335-9854 if you have any questions or wish to discuss these comments further.

We look forward to reviewing a revised draft of this nomination.

Sincerely,



Todd A. Walsh
National Register Coordinator
Michigan State Historic Preservation Office