

The original documents are located in Box 50, folder “President - Personal Home - Boyhood” of the Philip Buchen Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Dr. Mars

John Marsh's staff

8/12/74

Old home place in Grand Rapids being sold

Richard Roudebush ----

O. K. to deal with him ----

stop has been put on the VA sale until tomorrow

Roudebush can speak for Don Johnson (Administrator) ----

Roudebush is proposed to be the new Administrator.



LAW, BUCHEN, WEATHERS, RICHARDSON & DUTCHER

MEMORANDUM

To: PWB

FROM: _____

RE: _____

DATE: 8/16/74 TIME: _____

For your information . I just
rec'd this from Frankforter.

PWB





GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM 54 JEFFERSON S.E.
Michigan
49502
PHONE 456-5494

ART & MUSEUM COMMISSION
John H. Uhl, *President*
William C. Gallmeyer, *Vice President*
Mrs. G. M. Braseth, *Secretary*
George Jackoboice, Sr.
Mrs. Fred C. Brace
Raleigh R. Stotz
Alfred W. Hewitt
MUSEUM DIRECTOR
W. D. Frankforter

MEMO RE PRESIDENT FORD'S FORMER RESIDENCE at 649 Union Ave., S.E.

A former residence of President Gerald R. Ford's is located at 649 Union Ave., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. This house is in the hands of the Veteran's Administration and is presently unoccupied. It was acquired two years ago by the VA when the purchaser defaulted on payments. It was listed with Westdale Realty but was taken off the market on August 12. The Grand Rapids Press for Thursday, August 15, has a complete story on all the homes known to have been occupied by President Ford's family here in Grand Rapids.

There is great local interest in preserving and possibly refurbishing the 649 Union Ave. home. It is located within less than a block of the south boundary of the Heritage Hill Historic District which is on the National Register of Historic Places. In talking with Mrs. Linda DeJong, Director of the Heritage Hill Association, she stated that her organization would like to have the District extended to include the home. At the present time, Mr. John Cary, Chairman of the Grand Rapids Historic Preservation Commission, has been asked to begin action on having the house declared a National Historic Place which would give the property some protection. Having the District extended will take more time.

At a meeting of the Grand Rapids Historical Commission (not the Historic Preservation Commission) on August 14, I proposed that a letter be written to the Grand Rapids City Commission urging City acquisition of this property and, if possible, the refurbishing and refurnishing of the home with original furniture which may still be with members of the family, as well as with items similar to what was there. I would imagine that the memories of those years are vivid enough for the family to recall how the home was furnished.

I am quite upset with the realty company which keeps running down the neighborhood and proposed that the house be moved. The designation of this home as a historic site would tend to upgrade the neighborhood and help stabilize it, an action which is beginning to become evident in the Historic District, itself, because of the efforts of the Heritage Hill Association in developing pride of ownership in that area. To remove a building from a neighborhood because of the risk of vandalism is a slap in the face to the residents which could only produce resentment and increase the potential for vandalism.

The house is not extraordinary but, at the same time, it is not without architectural merit. It is a substantial home with certain architectural features and trim, such as fluted pillars on the front porch, key brackets under the eaves, and other details which place it above the common run. Moreover, it is a good example of the home (and neighborhood) occupied by the middle class businessman at the time and has solid, homespun, honest qualities which are an integral part of Mr. Ford's personality and which have helped bring him to his present high post.



W. D. Frankforter
W. D. Frankforter, Director
August 16, 1974

8/19/74

To: Jack Marsh
From: Phil Buchen



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Eva:

Please make photocopy
of this & deliver the
copy to Jack Marsh
across the hall.

Also, make file
for me on this subject,
with all material we
have included.

P.



MEMORANDUM RE 649 UNION STREET

In response to PWB's concern over this property, I have done the following.

1. I talked with John Bierce of the Westdale Company and am advised by him that the property was formerly for sale on an open listing available to all real estate brokers in Michigan. The Westdale Company has been acting as property manager for VA. Mr. Bierce tells me that yesterday as a result of the newspaper publicity, the VA was flooded with offers but that all offers were rejected and that the property was taken off the market yesterday. The Westdale Company is acting as property manager and has been instructed to clean up the yard and make preliminary repairs both to the inside and to the outside of the property. Mr. Bierce advised me that the man to contact with regard to this property is William C. Anderson who is the Section Chief of the Property Management Section of VA in Detroit, telephone 313-874-2340, Extension 263.

2. I talked with Mr. Anderson, and he advises me that the property has been taken off the market and that they are now waiting for instructions from the VA Central Office in Washington. The decision as to what is to be done with the property will come from the central office in Washington. The people to contact there are the Loan Guaranty Officer, a Mr. Echols, and the Deputy Director of Property Management, a Mr. Craig.

Mr. Anderson advised me that there is no limitation as to how long the property can be kept off of the market and that he understands that the property is just a few yards out of the Heritage Hill District and that it is possible that the property could be placed in the Heritage Hill District or otherwise be established in a historical area.

Mr. Anderson also advised me that the former owner of the property has long since ceased to have any rights of any sort in the property. In the event of the sale of the property for something



in excess of what was owed on the mortgage, etc. at the time of foreclosure, the prior owner would have no right to any portion of the excess. All receipts would go to the Veterans Administration as the present owner.

3. I called Mr. Frankfurter, the Director of the Grand Rapids Public Museum, who advised me that he had been contacted by the newspapers regarding this property. He confirmed the fact that it is slightly south of the Heritage Hill Area but that it is possible to get the boundaries of the Heritage Hill Area changed to include other historic property. He will prepare a memorandum to me setting forth his preliminary idea as to how this property could be handled. In the event that it is to be incorporated into the Heritage Hill Area, apparently a recommendation would come from the Grand Rapids Historical Preservation Commission of which John Cary is chairman. The recommendation would then be processed through a State Board and end up with The National Park Service. His memorandum in this regard will be forthcoming.

4. I also called Grand Rapids City Hall and left word for the City Manager or the Mayor to call me so that I will be informed as to what they may be thinking or planning to do in connection with this matter.

I asked all persons to whom I have talked, including Mr. Bierce, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Frankfurter, to be certain to advise me of any developments that come to their attention so that I in turn can keep Mr. Buchen informed. I impressed on them the necessity of seeing that all decisions have been cleared with The White House before anyone makes a precipitous decision. All of these persons indicated that they would advise me of any developments which come to their attention.

RWR



Evs:

Put with my
file (memo from
my G.R. law firms)
on this.

R



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

I'm sure
you saw
these

LAW, BUCHEN, WEATHERS, RICHARDSON & DUTCHER

740 OLD KENT BUILDING

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49502

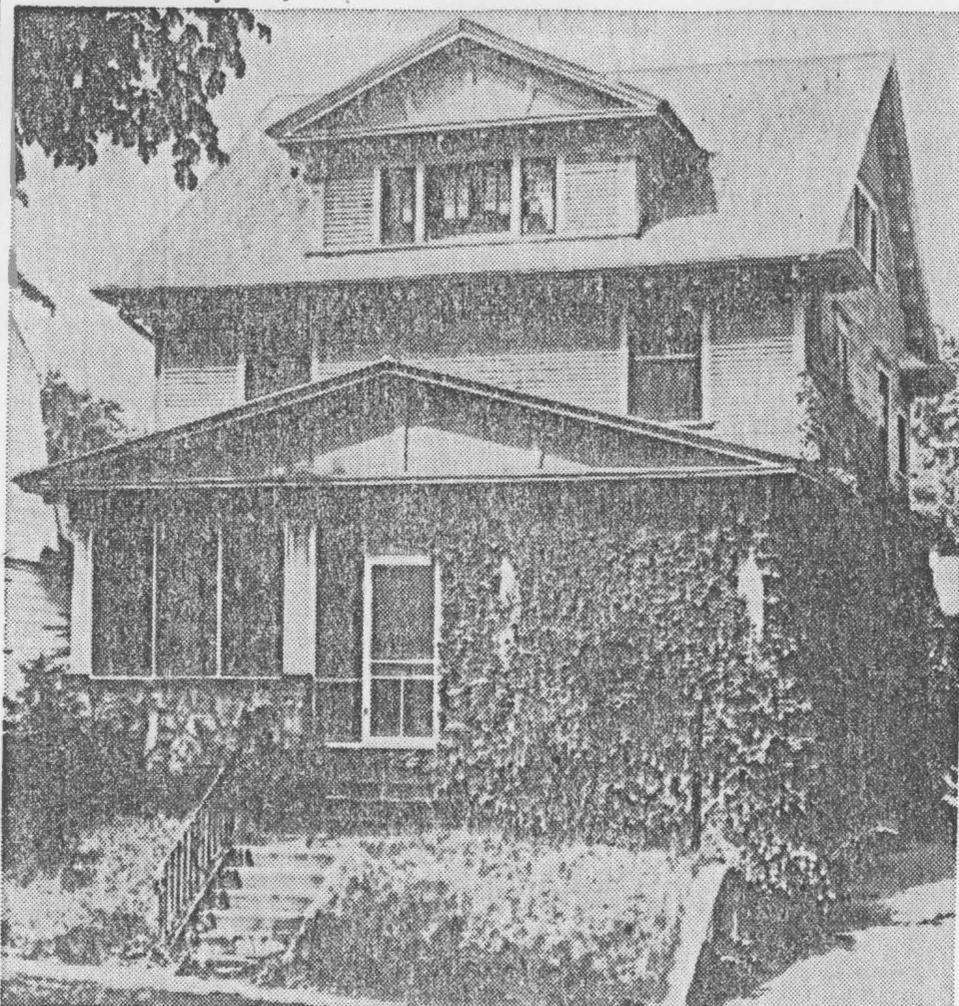


VIA AIR MAIL

MR. PHILIP W. BUCHEN

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON, D. C.



—United Press International

President Ford's childhood home in Grand Rapids.

VA Moves to Protect Ford's Boyhood Home

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (UPI) — Until Monday morning, you could have bought President Ford's boyhood home for \$9,000, and that might have been around \$8,900 too much.

The house at 649 Union St., which Ford occupied for some seven years after his mother came here, and married Gerald R. Ford Sr., came off the sales lists yesterday at the orders of the Veterans Administration.

The VA owns the house, which has stood vacant for five years in a poor, mostly black neighborhood in the city's southeast side. The VA took over the property when the last owner defaulted on his mortgage.

The selling price was \$9,000 plus about \$500 for

taxes and insurance. But even that drew no takers.

An agent for the VA said the only offer it received was \$100.

THE FORDS occupied the home from 1923 until about 1930 when the neighborhood was white and upper middle class. During part of that period the future president was an all-star athlete at nearby South High School.

Now its windows are smashed, its porch screen ripped and rotting, and its tiny, weed covered lawn cluttered with debris.

Most of the old Ford neighbors have long gone.

But the VA said it was taking the house off its sale list to prevent any speculators from buying the three-

story, four bedroom home — "and taking advantage of the situation."

A spokesman said the VA would like to turn the home over to a historical society or any other interested similar group.

"From a real estate standpoint," a property manager for the VA's local agent said, "it's not a salable neighborhood."

By that, he meant partly that the area has a high crime rate.

The home's last owner, Mrs. Ethel Henderson, said she sold the house five years ago because she feared burglary.

Mrs. Henderson said she paid \$13,000 for the old Ford home in the early 1950s. She said she was the first black to live in the neighborhood.

Ford home: Not for sale

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — A vacant, battered home where Gerald R. Ford once lived for seven years has been taken off the real estate market by the Veterans Administration to prevent speculation.

Since Ford became President last Friday, real estate brokers showing the home have been deluged with offers.

Ford's family lived in the house from 1923 to 1930. It is now in a state of disrepair, with weeds growing in the walkway, windows broken and screens rusted. Broken bottles litter the lawn.

The VA took over the three-story frame house two years ago when its owner defaulted on the mortgage.

The house was for sale for \$500 down and a \$9,000 mortgage. A broker said Saturday the best bid had been \$100, but after word of the home spread on Monday higher offers began.

John Bierce of the Westdale Co., which is handling the mortgage for the VA, said he thinks the house should be restored and moved.

"If I had the whole say, I think the Grand Rapids Public Museum still has some vacant land right downtown where it could be watched over more easily," Bierce said.



AP Wirephoto

THIS HOUSE, where Gerald Ford lived from 1923 through 1930, was on the market for \$9,000 — and wasn't moving. Now the VA is afraid it might move too fast.

Monday 10/21/74

12:45 Steve Vieregg of the Grand Rapids Press needs to talk (616) 459-1472 with you on the matter of one of the old Ford homes. Wants to know what the status is. Both the local people and the VA in Washington told him they are waiting for a decision from the White House. He would like to know what house he wants to have designated as the President's home for historical purposes. (He said the VA has sent a memo to the President asking which of the historical groups he would want to handle it -- Grand Rapids Historical Commission, Heritage Hill Association, State Historical Society).

*You said you'd like
to call Bob Richardson
on Tuesday.*



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

To: Mr. Buchen

From: Eva

I thought they were
going to preserve
"boyhood home".

??????

No, Pres. said he
had no interest
doing so

P.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date Nov. 12, 1974

TO: Mr. Buchen

FROM: DR. THEODORE C. MARRS

For your signature _____

For your coordination _____

For your information _____

Per our conversation _____

Other:

November 11, 1974

Dear Rowdy:

The President appreciated your interest in the Union Street home in Grand Rapids. Your thoughtful action was most appropriate.

However, the President does not have an interest in having that property memorialized in any way. You are free to handle it in accord with VA policy. I shall be glad to discuss this with you if you like.

Sincerely,

Theodore C. Marrs
Special Assistant to the President

The Honorable Richard L. Roudsbush
Administrator
Veterans Administration
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20420

Enclosure

CC: Mr. Buchen



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

10/31/74

To: Dr. Marrs

From: Eva Daughtrey

Mr. Buchen would like you
to prepare a reply to this
and please send us a copy.

Thanks so much.





VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420
September 16, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Honorable
Theodore C. Marrs
Special Assistant
To the President
The White House

Subject: Disposition of Gerald R. Ford, Jr.
Boyhood Home, 649 Union Street,
Grand Rapids, Michigan

In November 1972, the VA acquired the subject property by deed in lieu of foreclosure on a defaulted Veterans Administration guaranteed home loan. The VA was not aware this property was the President's former home until it was featured in a Michigan newspaper story. On the same day the VA withdrew the property from the market to assure the proper handling of a property which has become historically significant.

The Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593 require that Federal agencies assure the proper preservation of historic properties under their jurisdiction. The Veterans Administration has the following options:

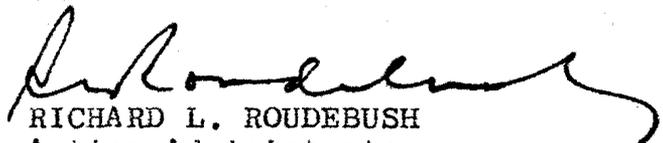
- a. To maintain the property at professional levels as established by the Secretary of Interior.
- b. To dispose of the property through sale, transfer, or donation in such a manner as to assure the proper historic preservation of the property.

It has been the policy of the VA, in the case of historic properties not needed in support of the agency mission, to dispose of the properties in accordance with historic preservation guidelines.

The Honorable
Theodore C. Marrs

We would like to give first consideration to any society or group the White House might propose to designate. If there is such a group, please advise us so that we may invite them to submit a proposal for acquisition and preservation of the Ford Boyhood Home.

Alternatively we propose to invite the Michigan State Historical Society and the Grand Rapids Historical Society to submit their preservation proposals.



RICHARD L. ROUDEBUSH
Acting Administrator

Friday 2/7/75

2:00 What we have is background on his "boyhood" home
in Grand Rapids.

This is the first of anything I have on his birthplace.



President **EXECUTIVE**
Boyerhof Home
R 3 / ST 22
GI 2
(see also
Paul Collins)

April 18, 1975

Dear Paul:

I want to tell you that we now think we have just the right place for the unique painting you presented when I visited Grand Rapids last fall. As you may know, Betty has been helping me decorate, and we decided that this example of your talent would be perfect for my private working office. It is a poignant blending of the past with the present and will serve as a constant reminder of your friendship. Many, many thanks!

With warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,

JERRY FORD

Mr. Paul Collins
709 Logan Street, SE.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Cuff Links sent under separate cover (*Lordship - James*)

GRF/mfw/mh/mw GIFT



30 painting

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

4/18/75

Dear Mrs. Ford,

I appreciated your guidance on this
one..... Just to be sure I have it
right, would you please look it over
before I send to the President's office
for signature...

Many thanks!

Marge
Marge Wicklein

*Thank you
signed*



December 20, 1974

PERSONAL

Dear Mr. Collins:

Thank you for the framed painting of the President's boyhood home and the White House received during his recent visit to Grand Rapids. He indeed appreciates the effort reflected in this example of your work, and is most grateful for the goodwill that prompted your thoughtful gift. President Ford is always pleased to be remembered by residents of Michigan, and this note comes to you with his best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) Mildred Leonard
Personal Assistant

Mr. Paul Collins
709 Logan Street, SE.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

ML/mfw/cf/cf

gift



BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL COLLINS

Paul Collins, born in Muskegon, Michigan, moved to Grand Rapids at an early age. He is a graduate of Ottawa Hills High School and author of a large mural in South Middle School depicting the Black Struggle.

He spent two years in Africa completing a collection, "Black Journey from Africa".

BIOGRAPHY OF PAUL COLLINS - Card 2

Portraits by Paul Collins include that of Roger Miller, Steve McQueen and Martin Luther King.

Spending time in Wounded Knee during the uprising, he has just completed a collection of 30 paintings on the American Indian.

###



Gift FOR: RESIDENT FORD

RECEIVED By: RESIDENT

DATE: 29 Oct

DONOR: MR PAUL COLLINS, Artist

ADDRESS: GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.

Gift: FRAMED PAINTING



Disposition: RECEIVED AT CALVIN COLLEGE FIELD HOUSE, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.
AND RETURNED TO MAIL ROOM, WASH., D.C.

Herbert G. Oldenburg
HERBERT G. OLDENBURG

NIEL A. WEATHERS
ROBERT W. RICHARDSON
DAVID E. DUTCHER
ROGER LAW
JOHN R. NICHOLS
W. FRED HUNTING, JR.
WILLIAM R. HINELINE
PATRICK M. MULDOON
GARY P. SCHENK
ALAN C. BENNETT
JAMES E. CHRISTENSON
FREDERICK J. BONCHER
JAMES L. WERNSTROM
JOHN P. SCHNEIDER

LAW, WEATHERS, RICHARDSON & DUTCHER
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS 740 OLD KENT BUILDING
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49502
TELEPHONE (616) 459-1171

President
Boylwood
home

May 2, 1975

Philip W. Buchen, Esq.
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Phil:

Mayor Parks called me Wednesday to discuss the future of the old Ford house on Union, S.E. He indicated that the City has had some contact with the Veterans Administration and that there is an opportunity for the City to acquire the property from the VA under certain terms and conditions. He further indicated that the City of course does not want to do anything which is contrary to Jerry's desires.

I told Mayor Parks that I would get in touch with you and that either you would contact him directly or get back to him through me. All other things being equal, I think it would be best if you would talk to Mayor Parks directly. If I can be of any help, let me know.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]
Robert W. Richardson

RWR:fb

Bob:

I called the Mayor on 5/8/75 and advised him of the President's views. Thanks and best regards.
P.



Monday 6/16/75

President
Grand Rapids
home

2:30 Steve Vierregg called from the Grand Rapids Press and wanted to talk with you about the Ford home in Grand Rapids. Has just talked with Mayor Parks, who said he had talked with you a couple of weeks ago -- and Mr. Vierregg wanted to verify some information for a story they are doing.

(616) 459-1472

They
talked
6/16/75



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 9, 1975

Dear Lyman:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter written to me from Mrs. Dorothy J. Webb in Tampa, Florida who expresses an interest in renting or buying the boyhood home of the President in Grand Rapids. Inasmuch as I talked to you about finding a suitable purchaser who would restore the property and make use of it as a family home, I thought I had better pass the inquiry on to you for referral to whomever is working on the matter in Grand Rapids.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

The Honorable Lyman S. Parks
Mayor of Grand Rapids
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

*Paw's
Boyhood
home*

July 9, 1975

Dear Mrs. Webb:

In reply to your letter of June 29, I can advise that I sent a copy on to Mayor Lyman Parks in Grand Rapids with a request that he advise you of the availability for purchase of the President's boyhood home in Grand Rapids.

I am quite sure he will have the proper parties get in touch with you.

Sincerely,

Philip W. Buchen

Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Mrs. Dorothy J. Webb
4708 Leila Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33616



White House Legal Counsel,
Mr Phillips W. Buchen. June 24 1975

Dear Sir.

I read in the Tampa Tribune News
Paper about the Presidents Boy Hood home
in Grand Rapids Michigan and that
no one cares what happens to the home.
I sure care very much about a house
that big and old standing empty
I would like to know some facts
about this old home the paper states
it was with the Veterans Administration
is the the Michigan VA administration
office -

The President Im Wintery. Im from
Michigan Born and Raised there.
We moved to Florida five years ago
our oldest son was in the air force
here and our Grand Children. but for
me things have changed my husband
passed away February 17th I took him
back home to Mich for Burial and all
my people are in Michigan also his
I want to go back home for good
I would like to know if this home could
be rented or is it for sell, I have a small
home here Im putting up for sell

We have no life here in Florida now
I'm only 49 years old and have a
son in his last year of school
We could put a bit of hard work and
love in to this home.

But we won't have very much money
after the sell of our home here we are
on Social Security as of now. but
after the sell of our home here I'll
come out with about 12,000 to 16,000
thousand Dollars. Clear of debts.

Mr Webb worked here for General Telephone
Company but didn't have five years of service
to get a pension from the company.

He also worked in Michigan for US Postal Service
for 10 years and was in war!! He was a
Veteran...

if you could give me any
information on this home I'd appreciate
a reply if you or staff could find the
time to answer - yours truly
Just a lonely American

Mrs Dorothy J. Webb
4708 Seila Ave Tampa Florida
Phone 813-837-2976 33616

COLLECT

ITEM WITHDRAWAL SHEET
WITHDRAWAL ID 01341

Collection/Series/Folder ID : 001900507
Reason for Withdrawal : DR, Donor restriction
Type of Material : COR, Correspondence
Creator's Name : Buchen, Philip
Receiver's Name : Parks, Lyman
Description : Personal matter concerning Sarah
Ball.
Creation Date : 07/23/1975
Date Withdrawn : 07/06/1988

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

*Pres
Buchen
Lansing*

August 22, 1975

Dear Ms. Kennedy:

In behalf of the President, I thank you very much for your letter of August 13 in which you discuss the matter of preserving as a public monument the home in the city of Grand Rapids where the President lived as a boy.

Your letter appears to indicate that the President must necessarily be involved in deciding what steps, if any, should be taken in regard to this house. However, that has not been his position, and he believes it would be inappropriate for him to become involved. Thus, when inquiries have been made, I have indicated that the President has no interest in encouraging efforts to deal in any particular way with the house in question. This does not mean that persons concerned with the fate or disposition of the house cannot take whatever steps have popular appeal and will gain spontaneous support from the community. Therefore, whatever suggestions you might have may be pursued in whatever way you see fit.

I trust that you will understand that the views here expressed do not reflect indifference on the part of the President, but only his reluctance to become personally identified with, or supportive of, a project intended to honor him.

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

The Honorable Bela E. Kennedy
State Representative
45th District
House of Representatives
P. O. Box 119
Lansing, Michigan 48901

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO: Mr. Buchen

FROM: MILDRED LEONARD

FOR: Information _____

Appropriate Handling _____

I seem to remember reading in the paper that you were the spokesman who "took the stand" for the President on this question of making his home into a museum for tourists. Will you please note "how strong" a stand the President took and reply to Maria Downs.

Thank you.

DATE: 8/19/75

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
August 18, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: MILDRED LEONARD

FROM: MARIA DOWNS



Did the President take a stand on this?
If so, how strong? Any suggestions you
can offer would be appreciated.

Thanks.

10
AUG 15 1975

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LANSING, MICHIGAN

45TH DISTRICT
BELA E. KENNEDY
P. O. BOX 119
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48901
PHONE:
LANSING 517/373-0839
BANGOR 616/427-7786

MEMBER OF COMMITTEES ON:
EDUCATION
ELECTIONS
PUBLIC HEALTH
RETIREMENT, VICE CHAIRMAN

August 13, 1975

TM/SD
The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
President of the United States
White House
Washington, D. C. 20501

Dear President Ford:

Although, we do not wish to counter your wishes that you have no desire for your home to be preserved, our Michigan Republican Bicentennial Committee are in hopes that you haven't taken a firm stand on it and that you might reconsider.

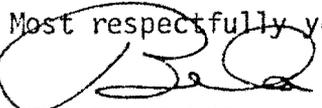
If you would have a change of mind, we believe your former home would be more readily accessible to the public and interested tourists if it were moved to the Grand Rapids Museum area, where they have already set up a similar exhibit. We feel that if your home were displayed in a public area, people would be reminded that our 'President Ford' was a Michigander. If this home were your birthplace, it should, by all means, be kept at its present site, but since it is only one of several homes in which you've resided and, since it is the only one of your homes still standing in which you've lived for any length of time, we feel it should be preserved as a memento to our first President from Michigan.

It would be difficult for us to designate the several sites where you've formerly lived as historical areas, as they would be so diffused that the general public might become disinterested and not visit them. Thus, we came up with the "Home Monument" idea.

I hope you will reconsider your earlier thoughts on this matter, as it would be deeply appreciated by our Committee, as well as the citizens of Michigan.

I will be waiting for your reply.

Most respectfully yours,


BELA E. KENNEDY,
State Representative
45th District

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

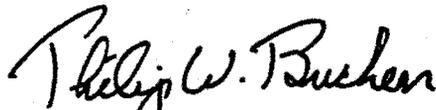
September 3, 1975

Dear Ms. Barr:

Thank you for calling to the President's attention the article which appeared in your local newspaper concerning President Ford's boyhood home in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The comment under the photograph of the home is misleading. It has been the position of the President that it is inappropriate for him to suggest or support spending by the community of Grand Rapids to restore or maintain this home. Inasmuch as any action in that regard would be intended to honor the President, it is not a step in which the President would want to express an interest.

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Ms. Janice K. Barr
P. O. Box 571
Middletown, Ohio 45042





Old Ford home

President Ford's boyhood home in Grand Rapids, Mich., is vacant and is falling into disrepair. The house is owned by the Veterans Administration. Ford has said he has no interest whatever in seeing the house preserved. (AP)

Wed., June 25, 1975

DM
Janice K. Barr
P. O. Box 571
Middletown, Ohio 45042

June 28, 1975

cl
15-8
President Gerald R. Ford
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

The enclosed article appeared
in our local newspaper last week.

Why don't you care to have your
boyhood home restored?

Thank you for your time.

With warm wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Janice K. Barr

Enclosure



*Boncher,
Washington*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 3, 1975

Dear Fred:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter sent to Fred Olert on September 5. If by any chance he did not receive the original, please supply him with this copy.

If you have any further questions, please let me know, but I hope you will emphasize to the Jaycees' Board of Directors that there is no thought of discouraging whatever plans their organization may want to develop.

I enjoyed hearing from you again and wish you and the firm continued success.

Sincerely,

Philip W. Buchen

Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Mr. Frederick J. Boncher
740 Old Kent Building
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Enclosure



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 5, 1975

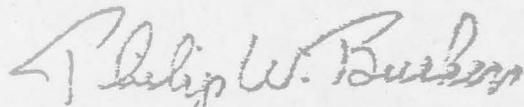
Dear Mr. Olert:

In behalf of the President, thank you very much for your letter of August 25 in which you propose establishment of the Gerald Ford Day Care Center in his boyhood home in Grand Rapids.

Your letter appears to indicate that the President must necessarily be involved in deciding what steps, if any, should be taken in regard to this house. However, that has not been his position, and he believes it would be inappropriate for him to become involved. Thus, when inquiries have been made, I have indicated that the President has no interest in encouraging efforts to deal in any particular way with the house in question. This does not mean that persons concerned with the fate or disposition of the house cannot take whatever steps have popular appeal and will gain spontaneous support from the community. Therefore, whatever suggestions you might have may be pursued in whatever way you see fit.

I trust that you will understand that the views here expressed do not reflect indifference on the part of the President, but only his reluctance to become personally identified with, or supportive of, a project intended to honor him.

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Mr. Frederick H. Olert, Jr.
External Vice President
The Grand Rapids Junior Chamber
of Commerce
Post Office Box 1573
Grand Rapids, Michigan



*Approved
by Jaycees*

FREDERICK J. BONCHER
740 Old Kent Bldg.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mr. Philip W. Buchen
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Phil:

Enclosed is a letter to President Ford from Frederick H. Olert, Jr. outlining a proposal of the Grand Rapids Jaycees to convert the President's former home at 649 Union Avenue, S. E. into a community day care center.

While some of us serving on the Jaycee Board of Directors feel that such a use for this property would provide living, viable service to the community, if the President has any personal preferences as to the disposition of this property, we would not want to take any actions contrary to said preferences. We would thus hope that the President could take a moment of his valuable time to respond to Fred's letter. Thank you for your attention.

The firm is keeping busier than ever, but we all miss a distinguished white haired gentlemen who was always seen puffing on his pipe.

Sincerely yours,



Frederick J. Boncher



GRAND RAPIDS JAYCEES "Young Men of Action"

chartered 1929

August 25, 1975

President Gerald R. Ford
the White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Ford:

Through the enclosed article which appeared in the "Grand Rapids Press" on June 21, 1975, the Grand Rapids Jaycees were made aware of the state of your boyhood home at 649 Union Avenue, S.E., here in Grand Rapids. The article indicated that the property has been taken off the real estate market to prevent exploitation by private speculators. It also stated that the Veterans' Administration, which foreclosed on the property three years ago, and your Administration are somewhat concerned that the house is "a ready target for arson and vandalism."

There is also, according to the article, a great deal of negative public sentiment towards you projected by neighborhood residents because the house is vacant, an eyesore, and quietly, but quickly rotting. Neighborhood residents apparently feel that the lack of immediate action on the part of your Administration and the Veterans' Administration reflects a lack of concern for the "little man," and smacks of racism.

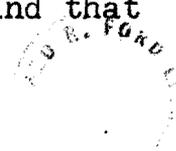
We in the Grand Rapids Jaycees know that you are concerned about all American citizens, and that the negative public sentiment will quickly be stemmed when the appropriate action is taken.

In analyzing the needs of the area surrounding the house at 649 Union, the Jaycees find that there is a definite need for a Day Care Center. I am sure that you realize the area is largely inhabited by working A.D.C. mothers and working married couples. Your former home can easily be adapted to establish the Gerald R. Ford Day Care Center, which would be of real assistance to neighborhood residents and their children.

After carefully checking local zoning regulations, we find that

The Grand Rapids Junior Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 1573, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Member: Michigan Jaycees, United States Jaycees, Jaycees International



GRAND RAPIDS JAYCEES "Young Men of Action"

chartered 1929

President Gerald R. Ford
Page Two

establishment of a Day Care Center does conform with the ordinances. We have also checked on the availability of Federal funds and grants to be used for such a project. Apparently such a project would be eligible.

Because the Grand Rapids Jaycees are not in existence for the purpose of operating a day care center, we are carefully considering the possibility of establishing the Center and almost immediately setting it up as a separate foundation with a Board of Directors composed of neighborhood residents, community leaders, and resource persons. A set-up of this type would allow us to receive donations in addition to any Federal monies for which we would be eligible.

Last week I contacted Mr. John Radowich of the V.A. Information Service at the V.A. Central Office in Washington, D.C., in an attempt to make a bid for the property. Mr. Radowich was most helpful, but indicated that several other possibilities were being considered. He indicated that the ultimate decision would come directly or indirectly from the White House.

We feel that establishment of the Gerald R. Ford Day Care Center can be of great service to our community, that it would be relatively simple to set up, and that it is the best possible use for your boyhood home.

The Grand Rapids Jaycees would be most grateful if you would carefully consider our proposed project. We will anxiously await word from you.

Very truly yours,

Frederick H. Olert, Jr.

Frederick H. Olert, Jr.
External Vice President

FHO/jo

cc: Philip W. Buchen

The Grand Rapids Junior Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 1573, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Member: Michigan Jaycees, United States Jaycees, Jaycees International





The Grand Ra

Forecast — Page 2A

VOL. 93 NO. 282

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 1975



CR Press Photo

Ford's Boyhood Home on Union SE is S

Old Ford Home Is Nobody's Castle

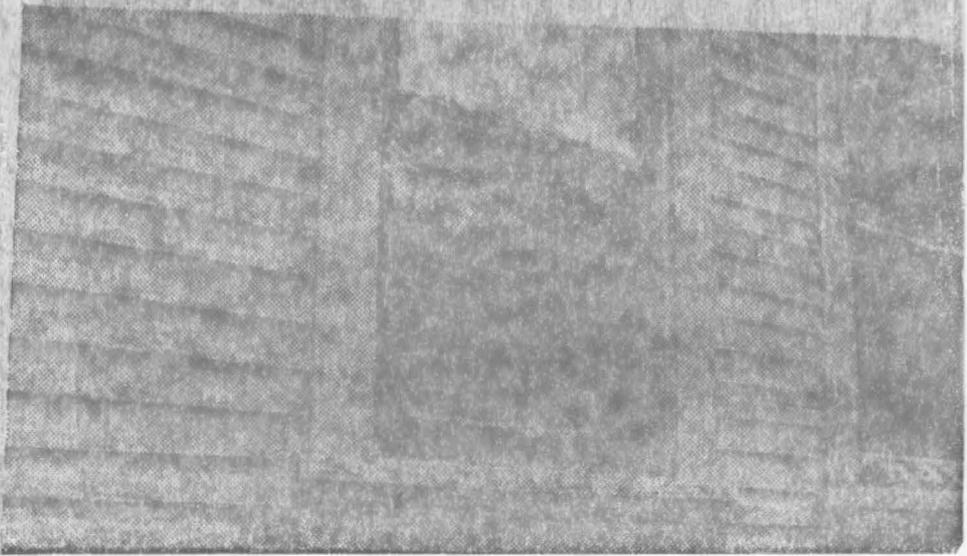
By Steve Vieregg

President Gerald R. Ford's boyhood home at 649 Union Ave. SE is rotting and neighbors are concerned that nobody, from the White House on down, seems to care.

The house, owned by the Veterans Administration, stands vacant, a ready target for arson or vandalism.

When Ford became president last August, there was talk of restoring the home, designating it a historic site and possibly turning it into a museum. Preliminary steps were taken, but persons at all levels — Grand Rapids, Lansing and Washington — wanted to know Ford's thoughts before proceeding.

The first public indication of Ford's opinion did not come until this week.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 7, 1975

*Pres's
Boyhood
Home*

Dear Carl:

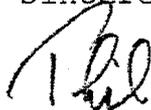
In answer to your letter of September 30, I suggest that it is perfectly appropriate for your Committee to decide upon a particular use of the President's boyhood home without approval of the President.

As you may know, numerous suggestions have been made as to what should be done with the home, the latest being from the Grand Rapids' Jaycees who are proposing to turn it into a child care center. In all cases, I have indicated that the President wants to avoid the appearance of encouraging any particular project which is intended to honor him. Enclosed is a copy of my letter to the Jaycees which expresses the President's position.

Unfortunately, some people have interpreted this position as one of indifference, and I hope you will explain that the President is merely declining to influence or encourage community efforts in his behalf.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Mr. Carl H. Morgenstern
The Gerald R. Ford Commemorative
Committee
Old Kent Bank and Trust Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502

Enclosure

1000



THE
GERALD R. FORD
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE

September 30, 1975

Mr. Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Phil:

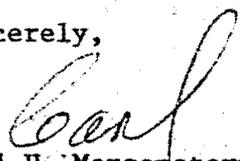
At the meeting of our committee on September 24, I reported on our correspondence regarding the President's memorabilia and the possible delay in having an answer regarding the availability.

While no definite decision has been made, our committee is leaning heavily in the direction of proper housing and display of this material in a suitable setting, as the way we should honor President Ford. If this is our final decision it will of course have to receive the approval of the President before we could proceed.

In the course of our discussion last week, the suggestion was made that it would be desirable to acquire the President's boyhood home at 649 Union Avenue, S.E. and move it to the site of a home for the memorabilia. Would you please, at your convenience and that of the President, let us know if such action would meet with his approval.

Our committee plans to meet again on October 29 and if possible I would like to be able to report on the President's reaction to this suggestion.

Sincerely,


Carl H. Morgenstern

MEMBERS Mrs. M. S. Keeler Frederick Mejer Paul Phillips EX-OFFICIO Peter M. Lamberts
Arthur G. Brown Ralph Kohloff Carl Morgenstern Vice-Chairman MEMBERS Lyman S. Parks



THE
GERALD R. FORD
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE

September 30, 1975

Mr. Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Phil:

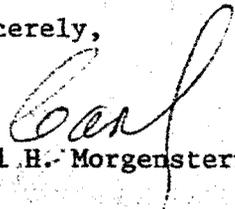
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Sincerely,


Carl H. Morgenstern

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Frederick Meijer
Carl Morgenstern

Paul Phillips
Vice-Chairman

EX-OFFICIO
MEMBERS

Peter M. Lamberts
Lyman S. Parks

October 14

Boyhood Home,

*See
Ford,
Dick*

Dorothy,

In response to your note to Mr. Buchen in reference to Dick Ford's comments, Mr. Buchen asked me to pass on to you the attached correspondence which is the way we have been handling the boyhood home situation.

shirley



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

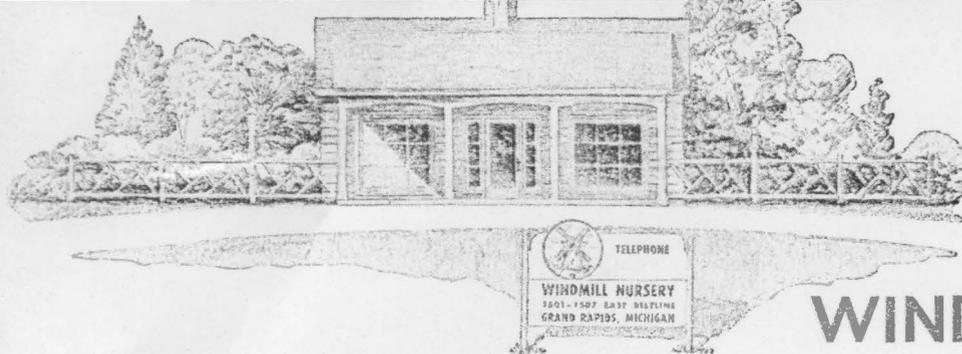
October 16, 1975

Mr. Buchen:

The President suggested I send
this to you to see if you thought
he should get involved in something
like this and whether or not it
would be all right to do so.

Dorothy D.





WINDMILL NURSERY

1471 ~~1501~~ East Beltline, N. E.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49505

Oct. 11, 1975

Mrs. Dorothy Downton
1st. Floor West Wing
The White House
Washington D. C.

Dear Mrs. Downton

I'm writing this as a member of the board of Grand Rapids Nursery & Landscape Assn. with respect to our association's project for the Bicentennial.

It seems that the West Bank Park along the Grand River is in limbo, and we discussed the possibility of landscaping the Ford house on Sherman Street.

I'm checking with you to possibly get permission from the President to do so. I realize it is only a small yard, but our budget for next year is not too great, so we are not looking for a large project.

We will wait for an answer from you as this project or whatever we do will not be accomplished till the spring of 1976.

Respectfully

Al
Alfred G. Furnquist
Member of the Board
G R N L A

P.S. The replacement check for the work at Sleeman St. arrived Oct 11, 1975 but no sign of the original.



GENERAL

October 29, 1975

*Pres. P. 125-
Boylston
home*

Dear Ms. Hill:

In behalf of the President, thank you very much for your letter of October 15 requesting permission to use a sketch of the President's former boyhood home at 649 Union Street as part of an advertisement by the Grand Rapids Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association.

A likeness of this house is generally considered to be in the public domain, and as such no special authorization from the President is necessary for its use in the manner you have planned. We appreciate your taking the time to write on this matter, and the awareness shown in your letter that it is generally inappropriate for the President to take any action which could be construed as an endorsement of a particular commercial firm.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Phillip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Advertising + Public Relations
Ms. Ruth Hill
Account Executive
Waters Building
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502

bcc: Mildred Leonard

PWB:BNR:ns

Central Files ✓

GERALD R. FORD LIBRARY
NOV 1975
CENTRAL FILES

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 29, 1975

*Pres's
boyhood home*

Dear Ms. Hill:

In behalf of the President, thank you very much for your letter of October 15 requesting permission to use a sketch of the President's former boyhood home at 649 Union Street as part of an advertisement by the Grand Rapids Mutual Federal Savings and Loan Association.

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With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Philip W. Buchen

Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Ms. Ruth Hill
Account Executive
Waters Building
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502





*Pres.
Boyhood Home*

THE
GERALD R. FORD
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE

October 31, 1975

Mr. Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Phil:

I thought it would be well to keep you advised regarding our committee's thinking about the President's former home at 649 Union, S. E.

After receiving your letter of October 7 we had the bank check the ownership of the house and learned the Veterans Administration had title to it. The Veterans Administration in Detroit told us they had many opportunities to sell the house, but a decision had been made (apparently in Washington) to give it to the City of Grand Rapids, if the city were willing to accept it.

Our committee has recommended that we urge the city to take title to the house and hold it, with the thought of ultimately moving it to a site to be selected for the housing and display of the memorabilia. At that time we would like to have the house placed in the condition and furnished as it was at the time the President occupied it, and open it to the public, along with the building housing the memorabilia.

I have talked with Joseph Grassie, City Manager, and told him of our interest in having the city acquire the house, and in general our plans regarding it. I am writing him today asking him to have the City Commission take the necessary action to accomplish this and am sending him a copy of this letter.

Sincerely,

Carl H. Morgenstern
Carl H. Morgenstern



MEMBERS
Arthur G. Brown
Russell Cole
Richard Ford

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Ralph Kohloff
David LaClaire
Mrs. Wm. McInerney
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Thomas K. Eardley, Jr.

Peter M. Lambert
Lyman S. Parks
John Prangley
Jackson J. Root
Chairman

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Rec. (B...)

January 5, 1976

Dear Carl:

Thank you for your letter concerning the decision of the City of Grand Rapids to take title to the house at 649 Union, S. E.

In response to your inquiry, GSA and the National Archives do not have the authority to fund this project. Their role is limited to maintaining Presidential libraries, subject to the appropriation of funds by Congress for that purpose. On the other hand, the Department of the Interior has statutory authority to preserve and maintain historic buildings under the Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act, 16 U.S.C. § 461, et seq. In practice, the Act has required a separate statute declaring the property to be an historic site as well as the appropriation of funds by Congress for the individual project.

Your interest in this matter is appreciated. However, it is the President's preference that Federal funds not be requested for this purpose during his term of office. I am sure you understand his position, particularly in view of his efforts to limit Federal spending.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President

Mr. Carl H. Morgenstern
The Gerald R. Ford
Commemorative Committee
Old Kent Bank and Trust Company
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502





Send copy to Barry to draft reply for this

THE
GERALD R. FORD
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE

December 18, 1975

Mr. Philip W. Buchen
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Phil:

The City of Grand Rapids has by resolution agreed to take title to the Ford home at 649 Union, S. E. with the understanding that our committee will provide the funds to restore and maintain it.

At our last meeting the question was raised as to whether the Federal Government, through the General Services Administration or the National Archives and Record Service, made funds available to maintain the former home of a President and a museum or similar institution housing the memorabilia.

Would you please, at your convenience, let me know if funds for such a purpose could be made available.

Sincerely,

Carl H. Morgenstern
Carl H. Morgenstern



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