

Historical Marker - HB11 - U. S. Topographical Engineers/Mariners' Church (Marker ID#:HB11)



Front - Title/Description

U. S. Topographical Engineers

When Michigan became a state in 1837, the Detroit office of the U.S. Topographical Engineers was headquartered on this site. The topographical engineers helped transform Michigan from a wilderness into a prosperous state. They also played a vital role in Great Lakes navigation before the Civil War. First appointed in 1813, the engineers surveyed land, canals, railroads, and harbors, and platted military positions relative to roads, villages, rivers, and ravines. They also constructed lighthouses. During the 1820s and 1830s engineers from the Detroit office built roads to Toledo, Saginaw, and Chicago, thus opening Michigan's interior to new settlement. As a result, Michigan's population increased from eight thousand in 1820 to two hundred thousand in 1840.

Significant Date:

Statehood Era (1815-1860)

Registry Year: 1957 **Erected Date:** 1997

Marker Location

Address: 170 East Jefferson Ave

City: Detroit

State: MI **ZipCode:**

County: Wayne

Township:

Lat: 42.32931000 / **Long:** -83.04212400

Web URL:

Back - Title/Description

Mariners' Church

In 1842, according to the will of Julia Ann Anderson, Mariners' Church was organized to serve the spiritual needs of Great Lakes seamen. Anderson had come to Detroit in 1818 with her husband, John, a brevet lieutenant colonel with the U.S. Topographical Engineers. Designed by Calvin Otis of Buffalo, New York, the Gothic Revival church was built in 1849 on the northwest corner of Woodward Avenue and Woodbridge Street. In 1955 the church was moved to make room for the Civic Center plaza. Hauled 880 feet along steel rails to this site, the three thousand-ton limestone structure blocked Woodward Avenue traffic for twenty-one days. The church was immortalized in the 1975 ballad "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" as the "cathedral" where "the church bell chimed `til it rang twenty-nine times."