

Historical Marker - S624 - W. H. L. McCourtie / W. H. L. McCourtie Estate (Marker ID#:S624)



Front - Title/Description

W. H. L. McCourtie

Somerset Center native W. H. L. McCourtie (1872-1933) was introduced to the cement industry by W. F. Cowham of Jackson in 1897. McCourtie soon went to Dallas, Texas, where he made a fortune speculating in oil and established the Trinity Portland Cement Company. During the 1920s McCourtie returned to Somerset Center. In 1924 he acquired his family's home and turned it into a community showplace. McCourtie sought to create a model town, giving free white paint to any homeowner who needed it. He also hosted the community's annual homecoming celebrations. Thousands of people came to "Aiden Lair" to witness stunt flyers and enjoy baseball, local musicians, dancing and unlimited refreshments. At the height of the Great Depression, McCourtie offered his estate as a place "Where Friends Meet Friends and Part More Friendly."

Significant Date:

Two World Wars and the Depression (1915-1945)

Registry Year: 1991 **Erected Date:** 1994

Marker Location

Address: 10426 S. Jackson Rd

City: Somerset Center

State: MI **ZipCode:** 49282

County: Hillsdale

Township: Somerset

Lat: 42.05018400 / **Long:** -84.40692900

Web URL:

Back - Title/Description

W. H. L. McCourtie Estate

The W. H. L. McCourtie Estate, may contain the country's largest collection of el trabejo rustico, the Mexican folk tradition of sculpting concrete to look like wood. Around 1930, most likely inspired by work he had seen in Texas, cement tycoon W. H. L. McCourtie hired itinerant Mexican artisans George Cardoso and Ralph Corona to construct seventeen bridges on his property. The artisans formed the bridges with steel rods and then hand sculpted wet concrete to resemble planed lumber, rough logs, thatch, and rope. Different species of trees can be identified. Two concrete trees that stand on the property continue to serve as chimneys for the underground rathskeller and garage. The McCourtie estate is listed in the