



Front - Title/Description

Spring Hill Farm

Peter and Sarah Lerich established Spring Hill Farm in the 1830s. Their daughter Liberetta wrote in 1923 that her parents, opponents of slavery, had built a hiding place into a hillside as part of the Underground Railroad. They planted a prominent cedar, known as "the Beacon Tree," to mark the location. Liberetta reported that African Americans escaping slavery hid in the shelter while fleeing. In 1939 World Heavyweight Champion Joe Louis purchased the 477-acre farm. An avid equestrian, Louis established a riding academy at the site, complete with a restaurant, dance hall, and lodge. Here he escaped from the world of boxing to live the life of a "country squire." Louis sold the farm in 1944, after which the property fell into disuse. Little of Spring Hill Farm remains today.

Significant Date:

Two World Wars and the Depression (1915-1945)

Registry Year: 2006 **Erected Date:** 2006

Marker Location

Address: River Bends Park

City: Shelby Township

State: **ZipCode:**

County: Macomb

Township: Shelby

Lat: 42.64825159 / **Long:** -83.06044936

Web URL:

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Utica Nike Base

During the 1950s the U.S. Army developed its Nike anti-aircraft program. The conventional Nike Ajax guided missile and its nuclear-capable successor, Hercules, provided America's cities with a "last line of defense" against attack by Soviet long-range bombers carrying atomic warheads. The Detroit region's Nike defensive perimeter included fifteen missile bases. The Utica site comprised a launch facility (located one-half mile west of here) and an Integrated Fire Control center/administrative area (located one-third mile south). Army and Michigan National Guard units manned the site from 1955 until 1974, when it closed. The enemy bomber had been replaced by intercontinental ballistic missiles, a new threat against which the Nike system would be useless.