

Michigan Historical Center

The State of Michigan has been collecting its history for more than 140 years. In 1874, the legislature made its first appropriation for state history (\$1,000), and in 1913 it created the Michigan Historical Commission. Over time, more and more people entrusted their personal objects, letters, photographs and documents to the stewardship of the state.

Today the Michigan Historical Center, part of the Department of Natural Resources, includes the Archives of Michigan and 11 historical sites and Museums. It is the steward of these collections, which include, 130,000 artifacts, 50,000 maps, 4,000 manuscripts, 10 million photographs, and the archival records that document state and local government.

It is not enough to simply care for these treasures; they must be shared to help Michigan and its people discover their sense of place. The Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing has 28,000 square feet of long-term exhibit space and 2,500 square feet of special exhibit space. The Museum's special programs range from "Story Circle" literacy programs for pre-K children to "BIG History Lesson" a week-long, teacher-led experience for elementary students, to "The Governor's Decision Room," where high school youth role-play the state's leaders as they make decisions based on challenging issues in Michigan's past.

The Michigan Historical Museum system serves some 70,000 school children each year—60,000 of them in Lansing. Total visitation is more than 80,000 in Lansing and 290,000 in the field sites. The system is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It includes history in eight state parks (Fort Wilkins, Fayette, the Father Marquette National Memorial at the Straits, Hartwick Pines, North Higgins Lake, Tawas Point Lighthouse, Sanilac Petroglyphs and Walker Tavern at Cambridge Junction) as well as the Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee and the Mann House in Concord.

The Archives of Michigan serves the public daily to meet legal, government, scholarly and family history research needs. Archives education programs weave Michigan historical content into state curriculum guidelines, giving students unique learning experiences that meet state standards while creating awareness of our shared past. It provides its resources to the public at www.seekingmichigan.org. Last year the site had 200,000 unique visitors.

The Center also supports the Michigan Historical Marker Program, serves as the state representative in managing the Thunder Bay National Underwater Sanctuary with NOAA and works with the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission. For details on these programs, visit www.michigan.gov/michiganhistory.

Cultural Heritage Tourism 2015

In 2015 the Michigan Historical Center is focused on refreshing many of our exhibits and enhancing trails and parks with experiences that appeal to cultural heritage tourists.

The national coalition Partners in Tourism defines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural attractions.” The 2009 Cultural and Heritage Traveler Study released by Mandela Research reports that 78% of all leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. That gives Michigan a target market of 118.3 million adults each year. They spend on average \$994 per trip compared to \$611 for all US travelers.

Michigan has extraordinary cultural heritage resources, but they need to be organized and interpreted before Pure Michigan can market them. That’s the job we have begun. This means putting Michigan’s stories where the people are—waiting to join a hike, stopping to catch one’s breath after riding up a hill, visiting a state park or harbor. Done well, the stories will give visitors a reason to stop in a nearby community or visit a museum or festival to experience more, stay longer and spend more.

2015 Museum Projects

- Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing: Refreshing oldest permanent exhibits (\$1 million grant over three years from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to start the process with an eye on more diverse, untold stories)
- Michigan Iron Industry Museum: Refreshing permanent exhibits (\$200,000 over five years from the Cliffs Foundation)
- Fayette: New outdoor signage on sports in the 19th century iron smelting town
- Sanilac Petroglyphs: New signage in collaboration with the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe
- Walker Tavern: New exhibit on early auto tourism in the Irish Hills
- Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing: Special exhibit for fall 2015 on Marble Arms and “The Invention of the Outdoors”

2015 Trail Projects

- Kal-Haven (partnering with the SW Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative)
- Haywire snowmobile trail north out of Manistique
- Huron River National Water Trail
- North Central Trail (Gaylord-Mackinaw City via Cheboygan)
- Copper Country Trail
- Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary Trail

New Archival Materials Providing Local Heritage Resources

- *Detroit News* card index (available online at www.seekingmichigan.org), clipping files and photographs
- *The Lansing State Journal* photographic collection and clippings files
- Town and city images available online at www.seekingmichigan.org
- State Census available online at www.seekingmichigan.org