

Historical Society of Michigan

Michigan History Calendar

Day	Year	Events
1 MAY	1903	Followers of "King" Benjamin Purnell opened the House of David in Benton Harbor. This religious community was best known for its amusement park and its traveling bearded baseball team.
1 MAY	1910	Optometrists were required to pass an examination for the first time.
1 MAY	1918	Michigan became "dry" before national prohibition became effective. Michigan voters approved a prohibition amendment to the state constitution. It seems while voters approved the change, many did not follow the law. Homebrew and "Speakeasies" were popular and many Michiganians made frequent trips to Canada where alcohol was still sold legally.
1 MAY	1981	Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the General Motors plant on what had been Poletown one of Detroit's oldest neighborhoods. About 3,500 residents were forced to move along with business, schools, and churches.
2 MAY	1844	The Detroit Board of Education opened the state's first high school in a building that had housed the University of Michigan.
2 MAY	1939	New York Yankee Lou Gehrig, the iron man of baseball, removed himself from the lineup at a game at Briggs Stadium (later Tiger Stadium) after 2,130 consecutive games. He was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, an incurable degenerative disease of the nervous system known to many as "Lou Gehrig's Disease."
3 MAY	1881	Leonidas G. Woolley of Mendon patented the first electric headlight for railroad locomotives.
4 MAY	1846	The Michigan legislature passed an act banning capital punishment. Michigan was the first English speaking government to stop executions.
4 MAY	1980	Forest Service employees failing to note high fire danger warnings set a fire near Mio to improve habitat for the Kirkland Warbler. The fire quickly got out of control and burned 25,000 acres and 33 homes.
5 MAY	1710	French settlers Jean Baptiste Turpin and Margaret Fafard were married in St. Anne's Church in Detroit. They were the first couple of European ancestry to be married in Michigan.
5 MAY	1769	Native chiefs, Okitchewanog, Couttawyin, and Ottowachkin transfer Hog Island (Belle Isle) to British army Lieutenant George McDougall. Belle Isle is now a park administered by the City of Detroit.
5 MAY	1831	The <i>Democratic Free Press and Michigan Intelligencer</i> now the <i>Detroit Free Press</i> published its first issue. It started as a 4 page weekly and became a daily in 1835.
6 MAY	1867	The U.S. Supreme Court terminated the only French <i>seignior</i> in Michigan, the land granted at Saulte Ste. Marie to Louis le Gardeur de Repentigny by Louis XV in 1751.
6 MAY	1968	<i>Detroit Free Press</i> won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the 1967 race riot in Detroit.
7 MAY	1763	Pontiac and 60 Ottawa warriors tried to capture the British fort at Detroit. Henry Gladwin had been warned of the attack. Pontiac withdrew when he realized he could not surprise the garrison. He and his followers laid siege to the stockade but the British resisted. Detroit was the only British fort west of Pittsburgh that did not fall to the Indians in 1763.

8 MAY	1820	The Michigan Territorial legislature imposed the first Michigan tax on personal property and land. The sheriff could arrest anyone who did not pay.
8 MAY	1917	Governor Alfred Sleeper signed the Damon-Flowers Bill that put a referendum on the ballot to allow women to vote in presidential elections. It passed the following November.
8 MAY	1959	Little Caesars, Michigan's first pizza chain opened its first store in Garden City.
8 MAY	1973	Carolyn King of Ypsilanti took the field as a member of the Ypsilanti Orioles baseball team. She was the first girl to play in the Little League. Little League officials took away the local charter. The city of Ypsilanti filed a sex-discrimination suit. The U.S. Division of Civil Rights ordered the Little League to drop its boys-only policy.
9 MAY	1970	UAW President Walter P. Reuther, his wife and four other individuals were killed when their plane clipped treetops, crashed, and exploded near the Pellston airport.
10 MAY	1865	The Fourth Michigan Cavalry led by Lt. Colonel Benjamin Pritchard of Allegan captured Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, near Irwinsville, GA.
10 MAY	1921	A law passed by the Michigan legislature made it illegal to "fix" any sporting event by bribing an athlete.
10 MAY	1933	Julius Stroh of the Stroh Brewing Company poured the first legal glass of beer after repeal of prohibition at an American Legion convention in Detroit.
10 MAY	1980	U.U. Treasury Secretary William Miller announced approval of a 1.5 billion dollar bail-out plan to help save Chrysler Corporation and the jobs of its employees..
10 MAY	1980	U.S. Secretary of the Treasury G. William Miller announced the approval of a 1.5 billion dollar loan guarantee for the ailing Chrysler Corporation.
11 MAY	1835	A Constitutional Convention convened in Detroit, it compiled the state's first constitution, but Congress would not recognize Michigan's statehood until 1837.
11 MAY	1978	Margaret Ann Brewer of Durand became the female first brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps.
12 MAY	1781	Chippewa Indians sold Mackinac Island to the British for £5,000. The British under Patrick Sinclair built Fort Mackinac on the island because he did not think Michilimackinac (Mackinac City) could be defended if American rebels attacked the old wood stockade.
13 MAY	1857	The nation's first state land grant college for farmers, Michigan Agricultural College opened in East Lansing. The school name was changed to Michigan State College and is now Michigan State University.
13 MAY	1913	Theodore Roosevelt arrived in Marquette for the libel trial of Ishpeming Editor, George Hewitt, who had publicly called the former president a drunk and a liar. When Hewitt admitted his stories were false, TR settled for 6 cents in damages, "the price of a good newspaper."
13 MAY	1954	President Eisenhower signed a bill authorizing construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. This was a joint project with Canada.
14 MAY	1866	Hope College was chartered. It started as the Holland Academy created by Dutch immigrants in Holland in 1851. The college is affiliated with the Reformed Church in America.
15 MAY	1756	After 4 years of fighting in America, much of it by Michigan Indians, England declared war on France. The French and Indian War was the North American phase of the Seven Years' War, the first worldwide conflict. When the war ended Michigan was transferred from French to British control.

15 MAY	1863	The Brotherhood of the Footboard, later the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was organized in Detroit.
15 MAY	1912	Detroit Tiger star Ty Cobb was suspended for beating up a New York Yankee fan that had heckled him. Three days later his teammates went out on strike, the first strike in professional baseball. The strike lasted two days.
16 MAY	1861	The First Michigan Infantry marched into Washington, D.C. at the start of the Civil War. President Lincoln who wondered if the west would support the war was said to say "Thank God for Michigan."
16 MAY	1927	Andrew Kehoe, school treasurer in Bath, killed his wife then set a timer that detonated explosives under the school while he blew himself up in his pick-up truck. 45 people including 38 students were killed in Michigan worst mass murder.
16 MAY	1956	The General Motors Technical Center was dedicated near Detroit.
17 MAY	1673	Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette left the mission at St. Ignace to explore the Mississippi River.
17 MAY	1915	The Detroit Athletic Club was founded.
17 MAY	1920	The Ford Motor Company blast furnaces at the River Rouge Plant began producing steel.
18 MAY	1675	Father Marquette returning from visiting with Indians in Illinois died near Ludington although the citizens of Frankfort would disagree.
18 MAY	1802	Father Gabriel Richard began his illustrious career as parish priest at St. Anne's in Detroit. He brought the first printing press to the state, published the state's first newspaper, helped start the University of Michigan and he was the first priest to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.
18 MAY	1929	The first Tulip Festival opened in Holland, MI.
18 MAY	1929	Members of the Purple Gang were arrested for arms violations and protecting Detroit drug dealers.
19 MAY	1722	Louis XV, King of France, conceded to Cadillac all the land he had cleared in Detroit.
19 MAY	1926	Sebastian S. Kresge, dime store magnate, contributed 25 million dollars to start the Kresge Foundation.
20 MAY	1774	The Quebec Act which American colonists considered one of the Intolerable Acts made Michigan and the Ohio River Valley part of Quebec. Most residents of Michigan were French Catholics and the act protected their right to worship and allowed them a voice in government.
20 MAY	1785	Congress under the Articles of Confederation passed the Land Ordinance of 1785 that provided for rectangular surveys, dividing the land into townships and sections. One section in each township was set aside for schools.
20 MAY	1835	The Detroit Common Council approved the construction of the first underground sewer to replace smelly and unsanitary open ditches.
20 MAY	1942	At the Victor Studios in Hollywood, Glenn Miller recorded what might be the best-known song about a Michigan city, "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo."
21 MAY	1813	Colonel Henry Procter, British commander in Detroit during the War of 1812, arrested Father Gabriel Richard for publicly criticizing his rule. The priest was held under house arrest in Windsor for a month before being released.
21 MAY	1852	Michigan Central Railroad ran its first train between Detroit and Chicago.
21 MAY	1937	<i>My Michigan</i> written by Giles Kavanagh and H. O'Reilly Clint of Detroit was named an official song of the State of Michigan.

21 MAY	1941	After years of bitter and sometimes violence resistance by Henry Ford, workers of the Ford Motor Company voted to have the United Auto Workers represent them. Ford was the last of the Big Three automakers to be organized.
22 MAY	1938	E.S. Votey of Detroit patented the world's first pneumatic player piano.
22 MAY	1972	Henry Ford II identified the 32-acre waterfront site including the Grand Trunk's Brush Street depot as the site for the Renaissance Center, a major attempt to revitalize downtown Detroit.
23 MAY	1893	A man accused of murder was dragged out of the jail in Corunna by an angry mob and hung from a nearby tree. The rope used in the lynching was cut into little pieces and handed out as souvenirs.
23 MAY	1920	Pennsylvania Railroad began running trains to and from Detroit.
23 MAY	2002	Governor John Engler signed a bill making the Historical Society of Michigan, the state's official historical society.
24 MAY	1825	Survey began on the Chicago Road, a military road between Detroit and Chicago. It followed the Old Sauk Trail now U.S. 12.
25 MAY	1670	Sulpician priests Fathers François Dollier de Casson and René de Brehan de Galinée arrived at Saulte Ste. Marie after leaving Robert de la Salle. Galinée drew the first map of the upper lakes showing the St. Mary's, St. Clair and Detroit Rivers.
25 MAY	1763	In the 1763 Indian uprising led by Pontiac, Pottawatomie from Detroit captured Fort St. Joseph and killed nine soldiers. The post commander Ensign Francis Schlosser and six survivors were brought to Detroit where they were exchanged for some Indian prisoners.
25 MAY	1820	Territorial Governor Lewis Cass started out on expedition to explore and secure American authority over the Upper Peninsula. Henry Schoolcraft went along as geologist and reported on the presence of iron and copper deposits.
25 MAY	1935	In just one hour, at the Western Conference (now the Big Ten) track and field championships held at the University of Michigan, a sophomore from Ohio State set world records in the 220-yard dash, the 220-yard low hurdles, and the long jump while also tying the mark in the 100 yard dash. His name? Jessie Owens
26 MAY	1768	In the first election held in Detroit, Phillippe de Jean was elected judge.
26 MAY	1824	Congress passed an act establishing the first federal road in Michigan. It took until 1829 to complete the United States Road between Detroit and Toledo.
26 MAY	1927	Henry Ford and his son Edsel drove the fifteen-millionth Model T off the assembly line. Later that day production of Model T's was terminated in order to retool the factory for production of the Model A.
26 MAY	1937	In the Battle of the Overpass goons from Harry Bennett's Ford security force beat Walter Reuther and Richard Frankenstein who were passing out leaflets urging workers to join the UAW at a bridge leading to the River Rouge plant.
26 MAY	1967	Kay E. Whitfield of Pontiac and Noreen E. Hillary of Grand Rapids became the first two women sworn in as officers in the Michigan State Police.
27 MAY	1942	The S.E. Overton Company of South Haven made its first shipment of walnut gunstocks for the M1 Carbine, the standard rifle for U.S. troops in WWII. By the end of the war the company had produced 2,661,054 gunstocks.
27 MAY	1947	Legislature passed a bill requiring lobbyists to register before they attempted to influence legislators.