

St. Ignace Stops Highlighted Among State's Favorite Roadside Attractions

Lehto's Pasties, Castle Rock, the Mystery Spot, the Deer Ranch, Totem Village, and the now-defunct Silver Lake Express, all near St. Ignace, are among historic Michigan roadside attractions now featured at the state historical museum and on its Web site.

A special exhibit of favorite roadside attractions in the state, some current and some from many years ago, will be on display at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing until September 14. The museum has compiled the exhibit using photographs and vintage souvenirs that show off favorite travel stops in Michigan, where families traditionally stop to eat, buy souvenirs, or take pictures. Some of these attractions are decades old, dating back to the early 20th century years when the expansion of the state highway system coincided with the growing affordability of family automobiles, prompting many Michigan families to take to the road.

The museum exhibit focuses not on travel destinations, but "on the things you do along the way," said Chris Dancisak of the Michigan Historical Museum. Postcards from many Upper Peninsula locations are included in the exhibit, and Straits area fudge and the Mackinac Bridge are also featured.

Mr. Dancisak, a former executive director of the Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association, said he wanted to be sure U.P. attractions shared equal



A vintage photograph of Lehto's Pasties Shop. (Lehto family photograph)



Deer Ranch owner Harold Kriesche with a fawn, in front of his sign in summer 2008. (Photograph by Chris Dancisak)



John Lehto (from left), Katherine Lehto, Elsie Hokannen, and Katherine Babcock at the pasty shop in 1990. (Lehto family photograph)

billing in the exhibit with downstate travel stops. Many people contributed ideas for the display, he said, including Larry Rubin of St. Ignace, a former executive secretary of the Mackinac Bridge Authority.

The Web site calls Lehto's Pasties on US-2 "the nation's first drive-in pasty shop," and features a 1958 photograph of founders

John and Katherine Lehto piling up pasties fresh out of the oven.

Pasty shop owner Katherine Lehto Babcock of St. Ignace was recently notified by e-mail that Lehto's would be featured at the museum, she told *The St. Ignace News*. The shop was founded in 1948 by Mrs. Babcock's parents, Katherine and John Lehto, after Mr. Lehto had completed a 20-

year career on the state ferries at the Straits of Mackinac. Lehto's Pasties is still family owned by Mrs. Babcock and current workers at the shop with Mrs. Babcock are her daughter, Cassandra Darnell, and Dan Smith, she said.

The museum's Web site posting about the roadside attractions exhibit can be seen at www.michigan.gov/museum.

Teacher Seeks Buy-out; Saving Paradise, MBT Funding Left out of State Budget

By Ryan Schlehuber

As negotiations for a renewal of a three-year contract with teachers continue, the Mackinac Island school board may also have to prepare itself to fill at least one teaching position that hasn't been vacant since 1985. In a short letter to the board Thursday, February 19, kindergarten teacher Vicki Urman asked to negotiate a buy-out option.

Mrs. Urman's annual salary, not including benefits, is about \$64,000, according to Superintendent Roger Schrock.

"A couple years ago, the board offered teachers a buy-out option of a year's salary plus \$5,000, but there were no takers," he said. "Obviously, things have changed [economically] since then and both the board and Vicki are negotiating possible options now."

Once a deal is worked out with Mrs. Urman, the same option will be offered to other teachers who are eligible, said board president Ben Mosley.

Mrs. Urman, who is teaching a class of 11 students this year and

will be eligible for retirement when she turns 55 this November, declined to say why she wants a buy-out, in a telephone call with *The St. Ignace News* Tuesday, February 24.

This year's kindergarten class began with 10 students but one student moved off the island, common to a community that offers mostly seasonal employment for parents, and a second, the son of Mr. Mosley, was taken out of the public education system by his parents in January, along with another son who

was in first grade.

Mr. Mosley, citing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, declined to say why the boys were pulled out of the school. They are being home-schooled, he said.

Dr. Schrock said the students are not truant and are officially listed as home-schooled. Because the district receives enough funding from non-homestead taxes, it receives no per-pupil funding, so loss of students does not impact the budget as much as it would for a school that relies on per pupil funding, he added.

"It's the parents' call," said Dr. Schrock in a telephone interview Wednesday, February 25. "There's nothing we can do about it if that's what the parents choose."

The total K-12 student enrollment is 70, down from 78 at the beginning of October. Eighty-three students were enrolled in the when school opened in the fall, but, as usual, some students and their families moved off-island after the tourist season ends in October.

Three classes – first, fourth, and fifth grades – have only three students, while the largest class this year is the senior class, with 10 students. There are 15 toddlers attending preschool classes at the school this year.

Governor's Proposed Cuts Could Leave Island School \$189K Short in Budget

Dr. Schrock cautioned the board to watch for possible cuts to state aid funding, specifically the Saving Paradise funding and Michigan Business Tax, citing Governor Jennifer Granholm's proposed cuts to the state budget.

The school may lose \$4,700 from a "Hold Harmless" fund, as well.

The Island school receives \$85,000 from the Saving Paradise fund, which aids geographically-isolated schools that cannot consolidate, and \$100,000 from the business tax, where "out-of-formula" schools draw funding from personal property taxes on businesses.

The Michigan Business Tax was enacted last year but left at least two dozen schools, including Mackinac Island, out of formula districts, said Dr. Schrock. As a remedy, a relief

fund of \$1.3 million was set up for the 2009 state budget, but Governor Granholm has proposed that be cut.

The state annually contributes \$750,000 through the Saving Paradise fund to aid in operation finances for Burt Township (Grand Marais), Mackinac Island, DeTour Area Schools, Beaver Island, and Paradise.

Work to restore the funding is already underway, said Dennis Cawthorne, a Mackinac Island businessman and Lansing lobbyist for schools, among other things.

"I think there is certainly a fair possibility those monies will be restored when the Legislature takes final action on the bill, which is a couple months off yet," he told *The St. Ignace News*. "We're working to get those monies reinserted. It's still going to take a lot of diligent work."

Burt Township received a larger portion than usual from the Saving Paradise funding to meet expenses to keep the doors to the school open this year. The school has 63 students enrolled this year.

The board has warmed up to senior class plans to make a trip to New York for five days in May, however, it asked the class make a presentation to the board at its next meeting Thursday, March 19. Chaperones for the trip will be Craig Bunker and teacher Mary Patay.

The School Improvement Committee presented a draft survey it will send to residents for ideas to improve education. Included with the survey will be basic information about the school board, a general review of a regular board meeting process, and school policies.

Reevaluation of City's Master Plan Focuses on Preservation

By Ryan Schlehuber

Low density and open space have dominated discussion of Mackinac Island's master plan in recent weeks. The plan is being reevaluated under a five-year state requirement and because of concerns that the wastewater treatment system is near capacity.

An eight-person committee, seeking to create a future land use map, is suggesting that large, undeveloped private parcels be preserved for low density housing or open space.

Serving on the committee are Mayor Margaret Doud, Councilmen Armand "Smi" Horn, Dan Wightman, and Michael Hart, and residents Trish Martin, Barb Fisher, Mary Dufina, and Lorna Straus. Also attending the weekly meetings are city attorney Tom Evashevski, city engineer Dennis Dombroski, and Mayor Doud's assistant, Kelly Bean.

Until this winter, the committee has met hardly at all, but now is trying to fulfill an action plan presented in 2005 by Connie Dimond of JRR, the city's consultants from Ann Arbor, that includes updating the community's vision for future development and mapping present and future land use.

With a completed current land use map in hand, the committee is now completing a future land use map and updating the master plan's four-page list of goals and policies for land use.

Also to be included in the committee's report to Ms. Dimond are potential maximum build-out figures from Mr. Dombroski, which will determine future expansion of water and wastewater treatment and other utility requirements, such as electricity.

A build-out computes potential development based on the city's current zoning law, taking into account the number of lots that can be divided from a large parcel of land, the number of dwelling units (apartments or homes) that can be built on each lot, and other factors.

Wastewater treatment capacity is the crux of the issue for future land use, said city attorney Tom

Evashevski, and this is the basis of the committee's desire to restrict undeveloped land.

When Stonecliffe Properties asked the Planning Commission in 2004 to build 13 additional housing units, the city said there was limited sewer capacity, and implemented a building moratorium that fall while it studied expansion of the system.

More recently, the city has allowed limited development, but has yet to decide how it will expand the system.

"I've been sitting through all of these meetings and the only thing I can think of regarding the future land use map that has been expressed as a major concern of density is sewer capacity," said Mr. Evashevski. "As far as I can tell, there only a few red spots [on the map] that are undeveloped now that need to be discussed."

Committee Identifies Areas Where Maximum Build Out Is Not Wanted

Large land tracts with high development potential mentioned by the committee include the large field in front of Mission Point Resort, the Cohens' Hedgecliff property northwest of the Annex, Silver Birches near British Landing, and the Stonecliffe area near the airport.

The Cohens say they may sell all or part of their 61 acres, which is zoned Cottage and has two homes. Subdivision and condominium development there could significantly boost the utility demand.

Mayor Doud noted that the Stonebrook development was built to its maximum allowable use.

"We don't want to see something like that happen again," she said, adding that continued high-density development will detract from the Island's historic ambiance.

She said the Stonebrook property had no specific zoning when it was developed. Since then, Council has amended the zoning ordinance to say that any property not zoned is automatically considered an R-1 (single family residential) zone.

The committee says it wants undeveloped property to be developed as little as possible and plans to

amend the zoning ordinance to say that all property not specified in zoning is considered "recreation," or "open space," designations applied to golf courses and to Great Turtle Park.

Such a change is one example of how Mr. Evashevski would like to see the master plan reevaluated, and he hopes the city will back it up with solid goals for future land use.

"I think the current map is almost identical to the future land use map," Mr. Evashevski said. "We kind of chickened out last time" on setting specific goals, when the city adopted the master plan in 1999. "We're still back where we were eight years ago. If we have a future land use map, then let's show what we really want."

Planning Commissioner Mary Dufina said she is concerned that some property owners may feel threatened by enforcement of the committee's land use vision.

"I see that if it was my property, if I want to build different than what the city wants, who's right?" asked Mrs. Dufina. "It's easy to say we don't want anything in front of Mission Point Resort, but the owners may have a different thought."

Mr. Dombroski explained the future land use map does not set any zoning policy, but visualizes what the community want the future to look like.

"The future land use map is what people want to see," he said.

Mrs. Straus added, "We're sitting here representing an entire community. What the master plan says doesn't mean there's going to be a Marriott out at Silver Birches. What we must do is put on paper what we think that ought to be. That is the point of a future land use map."

Master plans and their land use maps are used to rewrite zoning ordinances, however, and then become the support documents for enforcing the zoning.

To these housing categories - single family residential, cottage residential, and mixed residential - the committee added a fourth category to the map, called "low density residential."

"Some undeveloped areas may be best used as low density residen-

cial," said Mr. Evashevski, explaining why a fourth category needs to be added to the map's legend. "Anyone looking for large parcels for development, instead of them being allowed to build 10 to 20 houses on that property, we'd rather see three to four, with the idea that these lots be spacious for other features, for horses and barns, for example."

The committee plans to wrap up its master plan reevaluation this month.

Other discussions will include Mission Point Resort's open space, isolated commercial parcels, such as at British Landing, and seeking more restrictive commercial development at Surrey Hills, rather than the congested lot-line-to-lot-line development in the commercial district downtown.

The committee plans to meet at the Community Hall every Wednesday at 3 p.m. until the reevaluation is complete.

New Computers and Classes at Les Cheneaux Library

By Jonathan Eppley

Those who have trouble operating a computer will get some help on Wednesday nights this spring at the Les Cheneaux Community Library in Cedarville. The library will host several beginner computer classes, taught by Library Manager Ronda McGreevy, on Wednesdays between April 22 and May 13, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

A different class will be taught each session, focusing on, in the following order, basic computer operation, word processing using Microsoft Word, basic Internet navigation, and desktop publishing. The classes are open to all who are interested, Ms. McGreevy said.

The library purchased eight new computers, which were installed Monday, February 23, to replace eight older computers. They will be available for the classes as well as for general public use.

"Even though the computers might do OK with certain pro-

grams, they require access to more sophisticated software," Ms. McGreevy said about the computers being replaced. "They just run out of memory and are unable to keep up with the software demands out there."

The classes and computer purchase are made possible through several grants and technology purchases over the last year.

A grant from the Noyes Foundation for \$6,000 allowed the library to purchase, in part, the new computers. The remainder of the approximate \$8,000 cost was paid by the library's technology budget.

Grants from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Les Cheneaux Community Foundation, including \$900 from the LCCF, allowed the library to purchase a digital projector, cart, and projection screen last spring. The projector and projection screen will be used to help Ms. McGreevy teach each class.

"With the new computers it will

be a wonderful opportunity to come in and learn," she said. "We want to get people who haven't used computers before, to use them."

The projector and projection screen will also be used in a summer film series that will begin in June. The library was recently awarded \$750 from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs to help fund the film series.

The library offered similar computer courses in the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008 to teach Les Cheneaux area residents basic skills. Ms. McGreevy said mostly older residents registered for previous courses, but they are open to all ages.

She is excited about the computers and hopes they will draw a large number of students to the courses, as well as increased daily use at the library.

"They're wonderful," she said of the computers. "I think it's going to be a wonderful set-up for our students."