

EnVision Manistee County Fact Book

Manistee County Community Foundation

Spring 2005



Arts, Culture, & Humanities



About this Report

EnVision Manistee County

The Manistee County Community Foundation, with collaboration from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, has embarked on an exciting new visioning initiative. EnVision Manistee County will provide the community a clear and unified focus recognizing the challenges and options facing Manistee County in the future.

An important component of EnVision Manistee County is the creation of a county-specific fact book. An Envision Manistee County Fact Book will provide the community baseline information about the county in order to identify past trends to make better decisions about the future.

The EnVision Manistee County Fact Book series will integrate environmental, economic, and social factors in a way that demonstrates the interconnectivity of issues impacting quality of life in Manistee County. These Fact Book indicator topics include:

- Arts, Culture, & Humanities
- Economy & Employment
- Health & Human Services
- Government & Infrastructure
- Natural Environment & Recreation
- Population Characteristics
- Youth & Education

Manistee County Community Foundation

The Manistee Community Foundation (MCCF) began in 1986 with the mission statement, “To enhance the quality of life in Manistee County- for now and forever.” Since then, MCCF has been integral in the community by establishing endowed funds specifically for the betterment of the community, the granting of such funds in order to meet specific community needs, and by being involved in a variety of community issues. More information about MCCF and its goals and outcomes can be accessed at: www.manisteefoundation.org.

Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

Founded in 1973, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) facilitates and manages several programs for the ten counties in the Northwest Michigan region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works!, Workforce Development Board, Northwest Michigan Small Business and Technical Development Center, Project Invest, the Procurement and Technical Assistance Program, the Regional Planning Department and the Regional Repository for US Census data. Additional information about NWMCOG can be accessed at: www.nwm.org.

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Introduction

Why are Arts, Culture & Humanities important to Manistee County?

Arts, Culture, & Humanities are key elements to quality of life in Manistee County. Manistee County's history also offers insight to today's strengths and challenges. Additionally, many of Manistee County's historic places are now seen as cultural opportunities and as a way to honor Manistee County's past.

Cultural opportunities provide immeasurable benefits to residents. Museums, musicians, artists, and other elements of a community's cultural attributes are important to community health. Its benefits profoundly influence the region's population and include amenities that the many visitors who come to explore Manistee County's cultural opportunities enjoy.

What "facts" are there?

Manistee County history is derived from a variety of academic and personal accounts of what life was like throughout Manistee County's existence. While brief, it is meant to give a background on some of the major events that have shaped the face of Manistee County.

Culture is a notion that is difficult to describe and even harder to define or quantify. Included in this document are some of the annual events that demonstrate Manistee County's cultural experience and some of the major organizations involved in arts and culture, too.

History of Manistee County

The word 'Manistee' has many documented translations, including: "the river at whose mouth are islands," "the place between trees," "river with white trees along the banks," and "crooked river." However, "Spirit of the Woods," is the most documented meaning. Despite its debated meanings, the word 'Manistee' is known to be part of traditional Native American language.

For thousands of years Manistee County was home to various Native American populations. However, in more recent history, Manistee County was primarily inhabited by the Chippewa, Potawatami, Tawas, and Ottawa tribes. Ottawa (from the Algonquin word *ădăwe*, 'to trade', 'to buy and sell') applied because prior to white settlements, Native Americans in the Manistee County area were noted among their neighbors as intertribal traders.

Today's Native American population in Manistee County, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, are the descendants of and the political successors to nine Ottawa bands whose leaders were party to the 1836 Treaty of Washington and the 1855 Treaty of Detroit. In 1991, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians sought and succeeded in having legislation introduced in Congress to reaffirm their status as a federally recognized Tribe.

Father Jacques Marquette and/or other Jesuit missionaries may have been some of the first white men to visit the Manistee County area around 1666—1674. However, it was not until 1830 that there exists positive proof of white settlers in Manistee County. It was during the following decade that many white settlers came to the area for lumbering purposes. In 1840, John and Joseph Stronach decided to locate to the area for the purposes of building the first saw mill in that region.

It is thought that in 1852, the majority of Manistee County's population was still Native American. Approximately 200 white people lived and worked the lumbering operations at the mouth of the Manistee River. However, a large sand bar just beyond the mouth of the Manistee River made things difficult for lumbering. By 1854, an alternative channel was dug to alter the outlet of the river. From that point until the turn of the twentieth century, the Manistee County area was fast growing and well known for its rich natural resources and beauty. Manistee County was organized and officially recognized as a county within the State of Michigan in the spring of 1855.

On October 8, 1871, a significant portion of the City of Manistee was destroyed by a violent fire. It is estimated that over 1,000 people were left without food and shelter. As the community rebuilt the city, more attention was given to community design than in prior years. During this rebuilding time, a telegraph service was established and a courthouse was built. It is thought that in 1873, the City of Manistee held a population of 5,000.

Other natural resources were found to bring additional economic activity to the area in 1881, when an experimental salt well found a strata of rock-salt at a depth of 2,000 ft. Since that date, salt has been a successful industry in Manistee County. By the early twentieth century, Manistee salt plants were producing 4,200 barrels of salt per day. Manistee County developed in one of the world's greatest salt-producing areas in the world.

History of Manistee County cont.

It is estimated that in 1899, Manistee County held 27,000 people, as compared to Grand Traverse County which held 20,000 people. The demographics of people living in Northwest Lower Michigan at the time was a stark contrast to today's aging population. The population was very young during this time, with half of the area's residents between 5 and 19 years old.

In order to adequately support needed infrastructure need from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s many looked to the Manistee River to bring electricity to Manistee County. Early electric companies believed that the Manistee River was particularly well suited for hydroelectric power because it flowed quickly (as fast as 3,400 cubic feet per second) and was capable of producing 40,000 horsepower of electricity. Built between 1917 and 1920, the first dam on the Manistee River was located at the convergence of the Pine and Manistee Rivers. Originally called "Junction Dam" because of its location, the dam was later called Tippy Dam. At the time electricity was considered very modern and was an economic boost to the region.

Because of Manistee County's location and its tremendous growth, the shipping industry also became a mainstay industry for the area at this time. In fact, the City of Manistee was the third busiest shipping port on Lake Michigan after Chicago and Milwaukee. In 1908, 2,116 vessels, with a combined tonnage of 1,130,280 (mostly salt), entered and cleared the City of Manistee port. The City of Manistee, "Salt City of the Inland Seas," had 15 sawmills, 11 salt mining operations, a furniture factory, two daily newspapers and seven weeklies, a department store, eight drugstores, 20 doctors, 23 lawyers, and the third-largest electrical generating plant in the state.

Despite an estimated average annual output of lumber of 138 million board feet, the lumbering industry was diminishing in Manistee County and many of the mills shut down and workers left to find jobs elsewhere during the 1920s. While much of the County's population moved elsewhere during this time, others found success in agriculture, softwood and hardwood goods, and salt.

In 1909, the Huron National Forest was established and the Manistee National Forest was formed in 1938. In 1945, these two National Forests were administratively combined. The Huron-Manistee National Forest represents the dedication of the federal government to the area and the hard work of many workers, including the Civilian Conservation Corps who replanted much of Manistee County in the 1930s. The Huron-Manistee National Forest comprises almost a million acres of public land and is one of the largest national forests in the central United States.

Post World War-II Manistee County resembled much of the nation, as manufacturing became a significant means of economic activity in the area. Because of its Great Lakes port, the City of Manistee was a desirable place for many who needed a means to ship their goods. Even today, manufacturing remains a viable portion of Manistee County's economy.

Manistee County has been long sought by many looking for variety of recreational opportunities. In recent decades, Manistee County lakes and rivers offer an abundance of fishing and boating that has spurred economic growth to the region. Additionally, the hiking and camping opportunities the numerous public lands afford also add to the tourism base of the County.

Manistee County honors its past. Most of the events mentioned above, in some form or another, still produces relevance to Manistee County today. While this account of Manistee County is brief, the County's history is rich with an array of events and people that have shaped life in the Manistee County now and in the future.

Historic Places

- Currently, there are 13 locations in Manistee County that are part of the National Register of Historic Places and Districts.

Babcock, Simeon, House

LOCATION: 420 3rd St., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Person, Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Stick/Eastlake

HISTORIC PERSON: Schnorbach, Philip P.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1949

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Domestic

CURRENT FUNCTION: Domestic, Recreation & Culture

Camp Tosebo (Old Camp Tosebo Inn)

LOCATION: 7228 Miller Rd., Red Park

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: Anderson, Charles A.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Bungalow/Craftsman, Late Victorian

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Entertainment/Recreation

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1949

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Domestic, Transportation

CURRENT FUNCTION: Domestic, Vacant/Not in Use

First Congressional Church

LOCATION: 412 S. 4th St., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Architecture/Engineering, Person

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: Jenney, William, & Otis, William

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Romanesque

HISTORIC PERSON: Sand, Louis, et al.

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Religion, Social History

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1899

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Religion

CURRENT FUNCTION: Religion

Historic Places

Makinen, John J. Bottle House (Kaleva Historical Museum)

LOCATION: 14551 Wuoski Ave., Kaleva

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: Jenney, William, & Otis, William

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: No Style Listed

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1925-1949

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Domestic

CURRENT FUNCTION: Recreation & Culture

Manistee Central Business District

LOCATION: Roughly bonded by Maple, Washington, Water, and River Sts., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Multiple

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Classical Revival, Italianate, Romanesque

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Commerce, Transportation, Exploration/Settlement, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1850-1949

OWNER: Private, Local Government

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Commerce/Trade

CURRENT FUNCTION: Commerce/Trade

Manistee County Courthouse Fountain (Memorial Fountain)

LOCATION: Onekama Village Park, Onekama

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture/Engineering

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Art

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1899

OWNER: Local Government

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Recreation & Culture

CURRENT FUNCTION: Recreation & Culture

Historic Places

Manistee Harbor, South Breakwater

LOCATION: Mouth of Manistee River at Lake Michigan

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: No Style Listed

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Engineering

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1900-1924

OWNER: Federal

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Transportation

CURRENT FUNCTION: Transportation

Manistee North Pier

LOCATION: West end of Fifth Ave., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Transportation, Maritime History

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1925-1949

OWNER: Local Government/Federal

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Transportation

CURRENT FUNCTION: Transportation

Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church (Danish Lutheran Church)

LOCATION: 300 Walnut St., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: No Style Listed

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: European, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1899

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Religious Structure

CURRENT FUNCTION: Religious Structure

Historic Places

Portage Point Inn Complex

LOCATION: 8513 S. Portage Point Dr., Onekama

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Colonial Revival, Bungalow/Craftsman, Queen Anne

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Entertainment/ Recreation, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1899

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Domestic, Recreation & Culture

CURRENT FUNCTION: Domestic, Recreation & Culture

Ramsdell Theatre

LOCATION: 101 Maple St., Manistee

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Entertainment/ Recreation

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1900-1924

OWNER: Local Government

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Theater

CURRENT FUNCTION: Theater

Sandenburgh-Rogers Summer Resort Complex (Interlochen Cottage)

LOCATION: 2046 Crescent Beach Rd., Onekama Township.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Person, Architecture/Engineering

HISTORIC PERSON: Gates, Kathryn Rogers

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Art, Entertainment/Recreation, Social History

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1875-1949

OWNER: Private

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Domestic

CURRENT FUNCTION: Domestic

Historic Places

Udell Lookout Tower

LOCATION: Forest Rd. 5207, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Wellston

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Event, Architecture/Engineering

ARCHITECT, BUILDER, OR ENGINEER: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: No style listed

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Engineering, Conservation

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1925-1949

OWNER: Federal

HISTORIC FUNCTION: Government

CURRENT FUNCTION: Vacant/Not In Use

Selected Annual Events & Festivals

- As with many other rural counties throughout Northern Lower Michigan, Manistee County enjoys a wide spectrum of annual events and festivals, including:

March

St. Patrick's Day Parade—Manistee.

April

Rotary Variety Show—Manistee.

May

Memorial Day Parade—Manistee.

June

Juhannus-Midsummer Day Festival—Kaleva.

Muzzleloaders Shoot Time—Fort Rendezvous, Manistee.

Spirit of the Woods Folk Festival—Dickson Township Park, Brethren.

July

Arcadia Daze—Arcadia.

Bear Lake Days—Bear Lake.

Concert in the Park Series (through mid-August) - Onekama.

Lakeside Tour of Homes—Manistee.

Manistee National Forest Festival—Manistee.

Fourth of July celebrations throughout the county

Selected Annual Events & Festivals cont.

August

Copemish Heritage Days—Copemish.

Kaleva Heritage Days—Kaleva.

Manistee County Fair—Onkama.

Onkama Days—Onkama.

September

Brethren Days—Brethren.

Victorian Port City Festival—Manistee.

December

Christmas in Bear Lake—Bear Lake.

Victorian Sleighbell Parade and Old Christmas Weekend—Manistee.

Libraries

- There are six public libraries in Manistee County library system, including:

Arcadia

Bear Lake

Kaleva

Manistee

Onkama

Wellston

- In comparison, the number of libraries in the library system of some of Manistee County's neighbors are:

Benzie—1

Grand Traverse—6

Lake—3

Mason—2

Wexford—5

Museums

- There are a variety of museums in Manistee County that highlight historic and cultural events, they include:

Arcadia Museum—Arcadia.

Benzie Area Historical Museum—Benzonia.

Brethren Heritage Museum—Brethren.

City of Milwaukee—Former railcar ferry, now a National Historic Vessel, Manistee.

Kaleva Historical Museum—A museum made out of 60,000 glass soft-drink bottles.

Kaleva Train Depot—Kaleva.

Manistee Historical Museum—Manistee.

Marilla Museum—Thompsonville.

Music

Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

The Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus is an intergenerational ensemble dedicated to producing and presenting concerts of symphonic, choral, and chamber repertoire from the Baroque to Modern eras in a professional format using professional music editions, for the enjoyment and musical growth of our audiences and musicians.

Their vision builds on the mission by further aspiring to continually provide concert performances on a technical and artistic par with semi-professional symphonic organizations, especially in the presentation of emerging world class concert performers, and those professionals whose artistic merits are already recognized. The Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus will strive to showcase composers' new works through commissions. By presenting such artists and composers, the Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus elevates performance standards, stimulates and expands its audience and patron base, providing inspiration and learning opportunities to student musicians. Additionally, the Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus vision includes providing financial support and musical training through the Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus Scholarship Program and Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus organizational mentorship.

Most of the Manistee Symphony Orchestra and Chorus's players are from Mason (39%), Manistee (25%), and Wexford (11%) Counties. Most of the remaining players come from other counties throughout Northwest Lower Michigan.

Other Selected Music Events

Riverwalk Concerts—Free concerts at 7 p.m. Wednesdays, Memorial Day to Labor Day. Manistee.

Shoreline Showcase Concerts—Tuesdays, 7 p.m. Late June through mid-August, First Street Beach, Manistee.

Spirit of the Woods Folk Festival—Third Saturday, June. Dickson Township Park, Brethren.

Victorian Gazebo Bandshell—Manistee.

Theater

The Ramsdell Theatre

The Theatre opened on September 4, 1903 with a performance of "A Chinese Honeymoon." From 1903 to 1909, the theatre hosted over a hundred plays by traveling companies.

The theatre went dark in 1918. In 1923, with both Mr. & Mrs. Ramsdell dead, the estate considered demolishing the building due to high maintenance costs. In 1925, a group of Rotarians purchased the building for \$25,000 to save it from demolition.

Until 1929, movies were shown at the theatre, along with the production of several high school plays. In 1930, the Butterfield movie company leased the building and kept it dark until 1937 to eliminate competition to its local movie house. Starting in 1937 the local Kiwanis club put on shows that led to the formation of the Manistee Civic Players (MCP) in 1939.

Today, the Ramsdell Theatre is owned by the City of Manistee and is operated by the Manistee Civic Players.

Manistee Civic Players

The Manistee Civic Players was originally organized in 1939 and produced several plays through 1941. They were dormant until 1952 when they presented "The Petrified Forest" during the 1952 off-season of the Manistee Drama Festival summer stock program. The Manistee Civic Players produced its first musical, "Guys & Dolls" in 1963. In 1964 it was decided to end the summer stock program that used outside professional talent and to start a year-round season of locally produced shows including musicals. The Manistee Civic Players absorbed the Manistee Drama Festival into their organization.

In 1974 the Manistee Civic Players leased the theatre portion of the building from the City and currently leases the entire structure. The Manistee Civic Players is presently continuing its 47 year history of conducting workshops, children's plays and student drama classes besides producing its own shows. It also sponsors music and dance programs, lectures, talent shows, variety shows, seminars, school productions, etc. Using local talent the Manistee Civic Players has presented over 200 stage productions including more than 50 musical shows.

As caretakers of the Ramsdell Theatre, the Players have been instrumental in preserving the building for residents and visitors alike.

Art

Manistee Art Institute

The Manistee Art Institute was formed by a group of concerned citizens to create a permanent home for Manistee's artistic legacy and to make the visual arts a part of the daily life of the Manistee region.

With the encouragement of the Ramsdell Theatre Restoration Project Board and a resolution of support from the Manistee City Council, the Manistee Art Institute filed articles of incorporation as a non-profit organization with the State in January of 1995.

The Manistee Art Institute is an all-volunteer organization supported by its members and donations from businesses, corporations and individuals. Ten percent of all membership dues and donations is placed in an endowment account to assure future achievement of Manistee Art Institute objectives.

Each year the Art Institute has four to six exhibits, most of them in the T. Walter Hardy Exhibit Hall at the historic Ramsdell Theatre.