

EXPLORING OUR ROOTS:

People, Places & Events in Michigan Labor History



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You can find these labor-history sites on and off the highways of Michigan's two peninsulas. Consult the map on the reverse side for approximate locations, and call each site or check their website for opening hours. Enjoy your road trip!

UPPER PENINSULA

Illustrations: Melissa Washburn, Design: Barbara Barefield, Editor: Dave Elsila

1. Italian Hall and Keweenaw National Historic Park, Calumet

Seventy-three people died as they tried to escape down a narrow staircase in the Italian Hall in 1913 after someone yelled "fire" during a Christmas Party for children of striking copper miners. Visit the memorial at Seventh and Elm Streets, and the **Keweenaw National Historic Park** visitors' center, 98 Fifth Street, for exhibits and maps and directions to other sites, including a former copper mine, open to tours.

Drive 36 miles south of Calumet to visit the **Hanka Homestead** on Otter Lake, near Askel, where you can visit the Hanka family home, barns, hen house, grainery, blacksmith shop, sauna, root cellar, and milk house to see what life was like for many of the immigrants who settled in this area. 906-337-3168; nps.gov

2. Iron County Historical Museum & Mine, Iron River

Iron miners and loggers helped develop major industries in the western Upper Peninsula. Visit the Iron County Historical Museum, 100 Brady Avenue, Caspian, to see exhibits related to iron mining, logging, and life in Native American and immigrant communities. The museum is built on the site of an old iron mine. Forty miles northwest is the town of **Marinisco**, where lumberjacks at the Bonifas 2 Camp in 1937 kicked off a 16-week-long timber-workers strike that spread across the Upper Peninsula. 906-265-2617; Facebook: Iron County Museum

3. Alberta Sawmill, Alberta

Workers in this sawmill processed the lumber used in Ford station wagons ("woodies"). Visit the historical sawmill and restored village

on U.S. 41, eight miles south of L'Anse. 906-487-3673; mtu.edu/forest/fordcenter

4. Iron Industry Museum, Negaunee, and Cliff Shaft Mine Museum, Ishpeming

Unionized miners have worked in open-pit iron mines in the Marquette Range for decades. The Iron Industry Museum, 73 Forge Rd., Negaunee, documents their heritage, and in nearby Ishpeming, the Cliff Shaft Mine Museum, 501 W. Euclid Street, is housed in a former iron mine. Look for the memorial stone to miners killed in 1926 in the Barnes-Hecker mining tragedy on the museum's grounds. 906-475-7857; michigan.gov

5. Tahquamenon Logging Museum, Newberry

Newberry was one of the centers of the 1937 lumberjacks' strike. At this museum, located on M-123 a mile north of Newberry, you will find exhibits on Michigan's early days of lumbering and visit an authentic cook shack, a C.C.C. building, and more. 906-293-3700; Tahquamenonloggingmuseum.org

6. Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, Paradise/Whitefish Point

The men and women who lost their lives on Lake Superior's stormy waters, and those who sought to rescue them, are honored at this museum, 18335 North Whitefish Point Rd., Paradise. 888-492-3747; shipwreckmuseum.com

7. Soo Locks Visitor Center, Sault Ste. Marie

Skilled crew members have been navigating the giant freighters carrying goods on the Great Lakes for more than a century, using the Soo Locks to get through the

21-foot drop between Lakes Superior and Huron. The visitor center, 312 West Portage Avenue, has exhibits on the history of this marvel of engineering, operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 906-253-9290; saultstearie.com/member-detail/soo-locks-visitor-center

LOWER PENINSULA

8. Ironworkers Walk of Fame, Mackinaw City

This "Walk of Iron" honors the workers who built the Mackinac Bridge linking Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas. A statue of an ironworker throwing a rivet was made from over 3,000 tools donated by ironworkers. Five workers were killed and many others injured in the construction of the "Mighty Mac," the longest suspension bridge in the western hemisphere. The monument is on North Huron Avenue, and the bridge museum is at 231 E. Central Avenue, 231-436-5351; walkofiron.com

9. Walter P. Reuther Eternal Flame, Onaway/Black Lake

An eternal flame memorializes Walter P. Reuther, United Auto Workers president from 1945-1970 at the UAW's large and impressive Black Lake conference center, 2000 Maxon Rd. 989-733-8521; uawblacklake.com

10. Lumbermen's Monument, Oscoda

The **Lumbermen's Monument** is a 14-foot bronze statue of three lumbermen. You'll find interesting interactive exhibits about Michigan's logging industry in the adjacent log cabin, which serves as the U.S. Forest Service visitor's center, 5401 Monument Rd. on the River Road national scenic byway west of Oscoda. 989-362-8961; www.michigan.org/property/lumberman-s-monument-visitor-center

LOWER PENINSULA

11. C.C.C. Museum, Roscommon

The Civilian Conservation Corps Museum honors the 100,000 Michigan men who worked in conservation and preservation, including planting millions of trees.

The C.C.C. was a program in the Great Depression to provide employment for young men. 11747 N. Higgins Lake Dr. 989-348-6178; michigan.gov

12. Michigan Firefighters Memorial, Roscommon

A 12-foot-high bronze statue weighing 2,000 pounds honors Michigan firefighters who have lost their lives in the call of duty. More than 75 names appear on the base of the statue. 1295 E. Robinson Lake Rd. 989-275-5880; firemensmemorial.org

13. Frank Murphy Memorial Museum, Harbor Beach

As mayor of Detroit, governor of Michigan, and attorney general and Supreme Court justice of the U.S., Frank Murphy was a defender of labor and civil rights. Murphy's first home in Harbor Beach was both home and law office. Later a larger home was built next door for the family. The home is now a museum, located at 142 South Huron Avenue. 989-479-6477; harborbeach.com/parksrecreation/museums.aspx

14. Sit-Down Strike Memorial, Flint

For 44 days in 1936-37, auto workers occupied plants in General Motors' vast Flint network, while Women's Emergency Brigade members supplied them with food and built community support. Workers ended their occupation Feb. 11, 1937, once GM agreed to recognize the United Auto Workers. The victory inspired a wave of sit-downs throughout Michigan as thousands of workers joined unions, sparking the growth of the industrial union movement. An impressive monument honors the workers and tells their story at 1940 W. Atherton Rd. 810-767-0910; uaw.org

15. Labor Holiday Monument, Lansing

A historical marker at City Hall Plaza commemorates the Lansing Labor Holiday, a citywide general strike that shut down most of the city's factories and businesses on June 7, 1937. Workers took over downtown streets to protest strong-arm tactics by police against strikers at Capital City Wrecking Co., one of many shops newly organized by the United Automobile Workers. Capital City eventually negotiated a contract with its workers. 517-483-4000; lansingmi.gov

16. Spirit of Solidarity Monument, Grand Rapids

The monument in Ah-Nab-Awen Park, 303 Pearl Street, memorializes the Furniture Strike of 1911, when several thousand workers in the city's furniture factories walked out to protest low wages and poor working conditions. The strikers, demanding a nine-hour workday and a 10 percent raise, kept their walkout going for 17 weeks despite the company's refusal to bargain and its hiring of scabs. While the strike ended without an immediate victory, the sacrifices of the workers, who were supported by the mayor and the local Catholic bishop, were a catalyst to eventually winning higher wages in both the furniture and other industries. 616-456-3000; historygrandrapids.org

17. Michigan Highway Workers Memorial, Clare

Workers who have lost their lives while constructing and maintaining highways are honored in seven larger-than-life silhouette statues in a landscaped highway rest center located off US-127 near the intersection of US-10. 517-373-2090; michigan.gov/mdot

18. U.S. Postal Service Museum/ Railroad Workers Monument, Marshall

Visitors can learn about the history of the postal system including the contributions of postal workers and letter carriers at the U.S. Postal Service Museum, 202 Michigan Avenue, in the basement of the Marshall post office. (269-979-2719; michigan.gov) Also in Marshall, a plaque at 633 W. Hanover Street marks the site of the founding of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen in April 1863. 216-241-2630; ble-t.org

19. Monroe County Labor History Museum/Steel Strike Memorial, Monroe

The only labor museum in Michigan is built around the theme "for the good of all" and includes a timeline of labor history, the story of the 1937 Newton Steel Strike, and special exhibits in a historic union building at 41 West Front Street. A memorial marker to the Newton "Little Steel" strike of 1937 is located at the River Raisin Battlefield Center, 1403 East Elm Avenue. 734-693-0446; monroelabor.org

20. MotorCities National Heritage Area

Encompassing over 10,000 square miles in southern and central Michigan, MCNHA, affiliated with the U.S. National Park Service, identifies and marks locations important in auto and labor history, from Monroe to Saginaw, from Detroit to Kalamazoo. Information, maps, and tour suggestions are available at its website. 313-249-3425; motorcities.org



Sit-down strike memorial, Flint.



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METRO DETROIT

21. Labor Legacy Landmark, Detroit

North America's largest work of public art honoring working women and men rises above Hart Plaza on the Detroit Riverfront, and is ringed by bronze sculptures telling the story of labor events. Tiles on the central platform and along a spiral walkway contain quotations by labor, civil rights, and community leaders, and the achievements of labor through the decades. Location: West Jefferson Avenue at the foot of Griswold Street. 313-577-4003; mlhs.wayne.edu

22. Underground Railroad Monument, Detroit

This is an imposing memorial to the thousands of escaped slaves who made their way to Detroit before and during the Civil War, and then crossed the Detroit River to freedom in Canada. Location: Detroit Riverfront in Hart Plaza on West Jefferson Avenue, at the foot of Griswold Street, Detroit. detroit1701.org

23. Solidarity House, Detroit

The international headquarters of the United Auto Workers houses the union's administrative departments responsible for organizing, education, and servicing the union's members and retirees. In front of the building is a bronze statue "The Builder." Location: 8000 E. Jefferson. 313-926-5000; uaw.org

24. Cadillac Square, Detroit

Close to 100,000 union supporters gathered in this downtown plaza in 1937 to support workers engaged in a wave of sit-down strikes in factories, shops, hotels, and restaurants. Labor Day rallies were held here for many years from the 1940s through the 1970s. Cadillac Square is on the east side of Woodward just north of Monroe Street, Detroit. 313-577-4003; mlhs.wayne.edu



Transcending, the Labor Legacy Landmark in downtown Detroit.

25. Woolworth's Five and Dime, Detroit

Over 100 women as young as 16 years old locked the doors of this popular downtown five-and-ten store on a busy Saturday shopping day in February 1937. They occupied the store for six days, winning raises and shorter hours. Location: 1253 Woodward, Detroit. 313-577-4003; mlhs.wayne.edu

26. Workers Row House, Detroit

Built in 1849, this is the oldest surviving house in the city. It housed Irish immigrant workers in the Corktown neighborhood. Location: 1430 Sixth Street, south of Labrosse Street, Detroit. Facebook: workers row house Detroit

27. Grand Circus Park, Detroit

One of Detroit's earliest green spaces, this half-circle park has been the site of many events — from Depression-era demonstrations by unemployed workers to the 2011 Occupy movement. The iconic statue of former mayor Hazen Pingree, the "Idol of the People," honors one of



Walter Reuther leads sit-down strikers out of a Detroit auto plant in 1937.

the city's earliest progressive political leaders who helped streetcar strikers win their fight for justice. Nearby is Central United Methodist Church; its stained-glass windows include a portrait of UAW leader Walter Reuther and scenes of social action. Location: Woodward and Adams, Detroit. CentralUMChurchDetroit.org

28. Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry Murals, Detroit

Mexican artist Diego Rivera created 27 frescoes surrounding a court in the Detroit Institute of Arts. The murals depict workers in the Ford Rouge auto plant as well as advances in various scientific areas. Location: 5200 Woodward, Detroit. 313-833-7900; dia.org

29. Detroit Historical Museum, Detroit

The "Motor City" section of this museum includes displays on labor in the auto industry as well as exhibits on the making of the automobile, including a body drop from the assembly line at the old General Motors Clark Street plant. Location:

5401 Woodward, Detroit. 313-833-1805; detroithistorical.org

30. Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit

Housing the archives of many of America's unions and civic organizations, the library holds an extensive collection of documents and artwork connected to labor, including a restored WPA mural depicting labor struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. Location: 5401 Cass at Kirby, Detroit. 313-577-4024; reuther.wayne.edu

31. Model T-Plex, Detroit

Ford workers built the first Model T cars by hand at this factory before production was moved to an assembly line in Highland Park. Later, the factory was one of three owned by the Studebaker company and was the site of the first auto strike in U.S. history, in 1913, led by IWW organizer Matilda Rabinowitz. Colorful panels across the street show the history of this area. Location: 461 Piquette at Beaubien, Detroit. 313-872-8759; fordpiquetteavenueplant.org

The Underground Railroad Monument on the Detroit Riverfront in downtown Detroit.



32. Ford Highland Park Plant, Highland Park

The moving assembly line was born here in 1913, producing Ford Model-T cars, cutting production time from 728 to 93 minutes per vehicle. Thousands of job-seekers lined up outside the plant after Ford announced a \$5-a-day wage (with strings) that year, and where young union organizer Matilda Rabinowitz gave lunchtime speeches from a soapbox outside the plant. The factory, now in disrepair, was designed by renowned architect Albert Kahn. Location: 91 Manchester at Woodward, Highland Park.

33. UAW Local 600 Hall, Dearborn

Local 600 represents workers at the Ford Rouge plant. Its hall has an extensive collection of historical photographs on display. Location: 10550 Dix, Dearborn. 313-842-5350; local600UAW.org

34. Ford Hunger March, Dearborn

Unemployed workers gathered at several locations in metro Detroit on March 7, 1932, and marched to the Ford River Rouge plant in Dearborn to seek jobs and relief. Ford security guards fired bullets into the crowd, killing four workers that day and wounding a fifth, who died later. Photos of the march are displayed at the Rouge plant horseshoe turn-in on Miller Road, and a memorial park is under construction just west of the Fort Street Bridge, where the marchers gathered before proceeding to the Rouge plant. (Park location: Fort, Oakwood, and Denmark Streets). Graves of the hunger



marchers are in Woodmere Cemetery, 9400 West Fort Street, Block 18 of the Fernwood section. 313-842-5350; local600UAW.org

35. Battle of the Overpass, Dearborn

When United Auto Workers organizers attempted to pass out union leaflets on a Miller Road overpass to Ford workers on May 26, 1937, company security guards attacked them, sending several to the hospital. Photos of the bloody attack appeared in media around the world, helping turn public opinion against Ford, which four years later signed a contract with the UAW. A photo display near the site of the overpass is mounted outside the Rouge plant; access via a horseshoe drive on Miller Rd. between Oakman and Dix, Dearborn. 313-842-5350; local600UAW.org

36. Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, Ford Rouge Plant Tour, Dearborn

The Museum houses extensive exhibits on industrial development with sections devoted to labor, civil rights, and other topics, and the Village contains early Ford and Edison workshops and other historic buildings. Daily tours of the Ford Rouge assembly plant, which include movies depicting early union organizing efforts, leave from the Museum. Location: 20900 Oakwood Street, Dearborn. 313-982-6001; thehenryford.org