

Ford's interest in transportation extended beyond automobiles. In 1924, he ordered a custom-made 33-foot Hacker boat from the legendary Detroit designer/builder John Hacker.

*"Henry Ford loved exploring the outdoors and was always seeking adventure. Michigan was a perfect area to test drive many of his new vehicles."
— Robert Kreipke*

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY ROBERT KREIPKE (LEFT); ROSENFELD

PIONEER AUTO MAKER THRILLED WITH MICHIGAN WOODS AND WATERS.

Early voyageurs to Michigan made their way around the state by birch bark canoe. Those were followed by Great Lakes steamers and railroads that transported families to their northern cottages for summer respite. Transportation began to change dramatically in 1903, with the founding of the Ford Motor Company and its release

of the first Model T in Detroit in 1908.

It changed the way people lived, worked and played. Traveling no longer was limited to the rich and famous; it was open to the everyman.

"I will build a car for the great multitude," Henry Ford once said of the Model T. "It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to

own one — and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces."

An avid fan of nature, birds and travel, Ford not only delivered a way to explore Michigan, but he led by example. He helped shape the state's early tourism industry in more ways than one.

BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

Exploring Henry Ford's northern Michigan



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY DIANNA STAMPFLER



RESOURCES

North Branch Outing Club
fullersnboc.com

Lovells Historical Museum
lovellsmuseum.com

Grand Traverse County
grandtraverse.org

**Marquette Regional
Historical Center**
marquettehistory.org

Thunder Bay Inn
thunderbayinn.net

Ford Bungalow
michigan.org/property/
the-henry-ford-bungalow

Ford Center, Alberta
mtu.edu/forest/fordcenter

**Michigamme
Historical Museum**
michigammetownship.com/
michigamme-museum

“Henry Ford loved exploring the outdoors and was always seeking adventure,” says Robert Kreipke corporate historian for Ford Motor Company. “Michigan was a perfect area to test drive many of his new vehicles. The combination of water and fantastic natural scenery provided Henry a real playground.”

As early as 1916, Ford began making regular fishing trips to the Lovells area, located northeast of Grayling in Crawford County. The 138-mile Au Sable River was as popular then as it is now, with private clubs and lodges popping up along the riverbanks to attract anglers.

Ford was known to frequent the Au Sable Trout and Game Club, founded in 1908, and The Douglas House (also known as the Douglas Hotel), which opened in 1916 and later expanded into the North Branch Outing Club (where the membership rate was \$25 per year, plus \$3 per day for meals). He rarely traveled alone. It is said that he had his own private rail car that would drop him and his guests — friends, family and colleagues — at the town and the lodge of their choice.

“He and Edsel Ford did become members of the Au Sable Trout and Game Club, better known locally as the ‘Dam Four Club,’ as it was located where the former logging dam, known as ‘Dam 4’ was situated on the North Branch of the Au Sable River,” says Rob Burg, director of the Lovells Historical Museums.

During one noted trip there, Ford was harkened to assist another fisherman who was having car trouble.

“(The resort caretaker) Mr. Feldhauser found Mr. Ford in the clubhouse and told him there was a man on the other side of the river

who could not get his Ford car up a steep incline. The Ford would stall out and die before getting halfway up the incline,” recounts Glen Eberly, board member of the Lovells Township Historical Society. “Ford said, ‘I’ll get that car up the hill,’ and the caretaker took Ford over a narrow bridge to the angry auto owner.

“Mr. Ford said, ‘Excuse me sir, let me help you get your Ford up that hill.’ The man, quite surprised to meet Mr. Ford on the banks of the North Branch, gladly let Mr. Ford take control. Ford promptly started the car, turned the Model T around and easily backed up the hill in reverse gear.”



Eberly states he has told that story many times and himself assumed the key was reverse gear. But a man he met explained otherwise. He said “the Model T had the gas tank in the rear, and when the car was pointed forward up a steep incline, the gravity-fed gas could not get up to the motor. Thus, the car would stall.”

Ford and his son returned to the Au Sable the following summer, checking into the Douglas and signing the guest registry on Sunday, June 10, 1917. It was likely they were welcomed with a homecooked meal prepared for them by Mrs. Douglas. Considered rustic by today’s standards, the 20-room lodge also welcomed the likes of Charles Nash, John and Horace Dodge, Walter P. Chrysler, A.P. Sloan Jr., John D. Rockefeller Jr., Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone and the yet-to-be-published author, Ernest Hemingway, during the early part of the 21st century.

Known now as Fuller’s North Branch



Ford visits the Imperial mine in Michigamme.



TRAVERSE BAY, NEAR FORD'S ISLAND.

Traverse City's uninhabited Power Island is accessible to the public, with 10 camp sites, 5 miles of walking trails and a beach. Ferry service is available through the Grand Traverse County Parks & Recreation Department (grandtraverse.org) by calling (231) 922-4818. The cost is \$100 round trip for up to six passengers for residents of Grand Traverse County and \$300 for nonresidents.

Outing Club, the Prairie and Victorian-style lodge is one of the few remaining historic fly fishing resorts in the state open to the public. It is listed on the state and national historic registers and is the only public fishing lodge in the state to hold such status.

Ford also was fond of the fresh waters of Lake Michigan and Grand Traverse Bay. In 1917, he purchased a 200-acre island located 3 miles off Bowers Harbor in West Grand Traverse Bay. There was speculation he'd develop a major summer resort or game preserve there. But, it remained a rustic island where he, Edison and Firestone explored the shoreline and trails (while their wives stayed in town at the Park Place Hotel), according to local historian Kathleen Firestone, author of "An Island in Grand Traverse Bay."

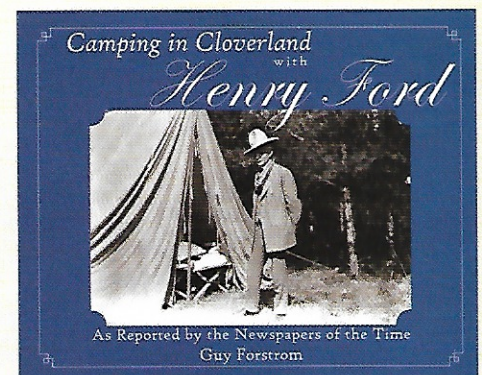
The property was sold in 1944, when Ford was 81 years old. Known today as Power Island and occasionally referred to as Ford Island (or Marion Island), it is open to the public and maintained by the Grand Traverse

County Parks & Recreation Department.

Between 1915 and 1924, Ford and a group of friends began taking extensive camping trips throughout the eastern United States. Calling themselves the "Vagabonds," Ford, Edison, Firestone and nature writer John Burroughs covered considerable territory over a nine-year period. Richard Bowman, archivist and director of library services at the Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners shares these camping trips often involved as many as 50 Ford Motor Company vehicles carrying monogrammed tents, equipment and staff.

It was August 1923, when the Vagabonds (minus Burroughs) plus E.G. Kingsford set out on a week-long camping junket through the Upper Peninsula, visiting many of Ford's operations along the way. Their wives also joined in the week-long trip, as did a Japanese cook and assistant, who were on staff to prepare all meals.

Most of the group boarded Ford's 200-foot luxury steam yacht, *Sialia* (the ornitho-



Additional reading

An Island in Grand Traverse Bay –
Lake Michigan Islands Volume 1,
by Kathleen Craker Firestone

Camping in Cloverland with Henry Ford
by Guy Forstrom

The Last Days of Henry Ford, by Henry Dominguez

The History of Pequaming,
by Earl L. Doyle and Ruth B. MacFarlane



Above: Ford's luxury steam yacht Sialia is tied up at the dock. Below: Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and Edward G. Kingsford play cowboys on one of their outings.

logical name for the Eastern Bluebird) in Traverse City, traveling through northern Lake Michigan en route to Escanaba. Once in the U. P., they loaded up in three chauffeur-driven Lincoln cars and made their way to Iron Mountain, caravan-style, with three supply vehicles and an Edison portable generator that kept the refrigeration working and the

camp lit at night.

The Iron Mountain News reported extensively on the trip, with photos provided by a media man traveling with the esteemed group.

"At 2:30 o'clock this afternoon, the round camping table was set up, loaded with an abundance of food, and the party enjoyed its first luncheon in Iron Mountain," the paper reported on Saturday, August 18, 1923. "The table, which comfortably accommodates the party, is in two sections with a revolving center stand, so that any of them at the table may turn it around to get any food desired."

On Thursday, August 23, 1923, the newspaper reported the Ford party had made its way to L'Anse in Baraga County, where Ford owned a sawmill, dock facilities, 30,000 acres of timber and other facilities. Business trips to the Upper Peninsula were common for Ford. He liked to keep tabs on his operations and holdings. Over the course of his career, he acquired over 313,000 acres of timberland for logging, operated several mill sites and owned several towns.

The 1923 purchase of the town of Pequaming, just north of L'Anse, for nearly \$3 million helped make Ford the largest individual



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY ROBERT KREPKA (TOP)

property owner and tax payer in the U.P. at the time. Among his assets was the 1914 Hebard Bungalow — an expansive 5,000-square-foot summer home overlooking the bay, which today welcomes new generations of vacationers as a year-round rental.

Ironically, the man known for paving new paths and forging progress found himself halting the state of Michigan in its attempts to extend the M-35 trunkline across the U.P. in 1927.

The proposed road would have cut through Ford's property and the adjacent Huron Mountain Club — an exclusive 24,000-acre wilderness retreat along the shores of Lake Superior. It was established around 1890 by millionaire industrialists from Detroit and Chicago. The group was so elite, Ford originally was on the waiting list to join. His efforts against the road project must have impressed the club, as they eventually made him a full member. Today, the Huron Mountain Club consists of 50 primary members and 100 associate members who have access to the private and heavily guarded hunting and fishing resort facility.

Henry Ford's iconic tire tracks lead to dozens of historic sites around the U.P., including a 30-plus mile scenic two-track between Big Bay and L'Anse. Visitors today can spend the night at the Thunder Bay Inn, where Ford once stayed for several months while in town on business. One of the front second-floor guest rooms is named after the auto pioneer and former owner of the town.

An historical marker at Cowboy Lake, southwest of Iron Mountain, identifies where Ford's 1923 camping trip took place. Alberta is home to the Ford Forestry Center, managed by Michigan Tech. Twenty-two miles southeast is the Michigamme Historical Museum, which features an exhibit focused on Ford's impact on the community.

The Marquette Regional History Center's archives contain extensive Ford files from the county and beyond. Among the items available for viewing is "Camping in Cloverland with Henry Ford," an out-of-print book published in 2012 by Guy Forstrom, which chronicles Ford's recreational time in the U.P. during that monumental summer of 1923.



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Behind the wheel of a Model T

WHEN THE FIRST MODEL T rolled off the Ford assembly line in the fall of 1908, there wasn't an education program for drivers or licenses for their cars. By 1910, the state of Michigan required residents to register their vehicles and display license plates. It would be 1919 before drivers were required to apply for paper driving permits. Among the early residents to be licensed was none other than Henry Ford, who was 56 at the time.



Driver's education wouldn't be required for years to come. In 1955, Michigan became the first state to pass a driver education law. By then, the Model T was a thing of past — although in its 19-year history, more than 15 million "Tin Lizzies" were manufactured.

Today, there still is a place where drivers are invited to get behind the wheel of one of Ford's legendary Model T's. The Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners, open since 1966 and rated one of the nation's top five automotive museums in the country, offers some 40 classes each summer for those who want a truly memorable motoring experience.

Class begins with historian-guided tours of the museum, focusing on Henry Ford, his company and how the Model T changed Michigan and the world. Trained instructors then highlight the ins and outs of these crank-up cars, covering everything from the use of spark and throttle control levers and shifting techniques to the coordination of hand and foot controls and the correct use of the neutral and brake levers. Once those basics are covered, it's time for the road test along a 2.5-mile paved route that meanders through the historic 90-acre manicured campus.

Each "graduate" receives a certificate of completion, a DVD of vintage Model T newsreel footage and a Model T driving book. Model T driving class size is limited and reservations are required by calling (269) 671-5089. For more information, visit gilmorecarmuseum.org.

— Dianna Stampfler