

Island Horse Museum, Surrey Hills, Is Open to the Public



HORSE TALES

by Candice C. Dunnigan

You may be on Mackinac Island and wonder, what can I do with my family, free of charge? Or, if you're living here, you may have those end-of-summer visitors, the "friends from downstate" who arrive and expect you to take them around for a day. Either way, free activities may seem scarce on the "Rock," but they can be found. If you happen to be interested in horses, you're in luck, because there is actually a horse museum open to the public free of charge, seven days a week.

Not many people realize that Surrey Hills (a destination stop on the Mackinac Island Carriage Tour) was created, in part, to tell a history of transportation by horse and carriage

here on Mackinac Island. Most people think the only way to get to the museum is by purchasing a ticket for their carriage tour, but, in actuality, all you have to do is bike or walk up Cadotte Hill, continue up Hoban to the front door, and enter. Granted, the road has a rise to it. Another way to get there is by taxi.

Once inside, there's quite a bit to see, if you have an interest. I have a keen interest, and cannot believe that the last time I was there was in 1989. What a pleasant surprise the museum is.

Mackinac Island Carriage Tours has spotlighted unique carriages, as well as a wide range of farrier tools, horse-shoes, and wonderful photo-



Mackinac Island Carriage Tours' Surrey Hills on Cadotte Avenue is not just a switching station for horses. It also has a horse museum, which is open to the public. It is also the storage site for the Island's unique horse-drawn fire pump and horse-drawn hearse.

graphs.

Surrey Hills also has a practical side to it, as the spot serves as a switching station for the buggies that originate on Main Street. Passengers disembark there, and then commence the second part of their tour on the large passenger three-horse hitch.

Prior to embarking, visitors can take advantage of the restroom, have a cup of coffee, or a soda pop, enjoy an ice-cream cone, or have a truly great doughnut from the Feed Bag (one of the six concessions) inside. Did I mention there's fudge, too?

Beyond those amenities, there's an ample outside veranda with tables and chairs, plenty of room for children to run around, and even a couple of amiable goats to pet. For a separate fee, there's a butterfly house to visit.

Mackinac Island Carriage Tours has worked hard to keep the grounds well landscaped

and flowered. For horse lovers, it's one of the best spots to watch the entrances and exits of the multitudes of the Island's working horse force.

Perhaps the best-loved carriage in the place isn't a carriage at all, but a real horse-drawn fire pump.

The pump is an actual piece of firefighting equipment that was once drawn to the fires by either two or three large draft horses. The pumper can still bring 45 pounds of pressure to the hose.

Another fascinating piece on display is the City of Mackinac Island's horse-drawn hearse. It is still in use, and when needed, the hearse simply is rolled out of Surrey Hills and hitched to a waiting team. It is interesting to listen to the reactions of visitors when they see it.

There are several types and styles of carriages that are suspended, as well as perched for view on the second level. These include some models by Studebaker, and there are surreys, runabouts, and traps. Surrey Hills also has a small, heavy (solid mahogany) antique carriage from the Pyrennes Mountains in Spain, meant to be pulled by a pair of mules or donkeys.

Personally, my two fav-

orites are the bird's eye maple surrey, made in Glens Falls, New York. It's old, possibly from the late 1860s to 1870s, exceptionally crafted, and still drivable. The other is a very large and imposing carriage called a Victoria, which came from the Delos Blodgett Estate on Mackinac Island's West Bluff.

There were only 15 of that model ever made. Looking at it while sharing a box of popcorn, were twins Joey and Katie Szekely from Strongsville, Ohio. They were visiting that day with their parents. They liked the carriages, they loved the popcorn, and they were even more excited to see three big horses all hooked up, waiting to show them more.

Surrey Hills is a pretty nice place to visit. You should really stop in and take a long look – and that's straight from the horse's mouth.

P.S. The Grand Hotel Stable also has a tidy, informative treasure of a museum, also free of charge, and worth the visit, too. But that's another tale.

Candice Dunnigan is an active member of the American Equestrian Association, the Waterloo Hunt, and the Mackinac Horsemen's Association. Seasonally she resides at Easterly Cottage.

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Menu Highlights

House Potato Chips \$4.95 Thin slices of crisp Idaho potatoes served with warm bleu cheese sauce

A Salad for the Chef \$9.75 Crisp field greens, sweet peppers, ripe tomato, double-smoked bacon, roasted turkey, bleu cheese and caramelized walnuts tossed in a creamy garlic dressing

Sandwiches

BLT & G \$8.75 Thick caramelized bacon, crisp lettuce, ripe tomato, smoked gouda cheese and mayonnaise on grilled grilled sourdough bread

Chicken Mackinac \$9.75 Char-grilled chicken breast, double-smoked bacon, mushrooms, onions and Gruyère Swiss cheese on a fresh kaiser roll

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