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Michigan Maritime Museum Purchases Historic Jensen Property

“This is truly an historic day for the Museum and for South Haven,” says Michigan Maritime Museum Executive Director Patti Reinert. “We could not be more excited to be purchasing this historic property. This purchase has been a dream for many people involved with the Museum for a very long time. The process has been three years in the making and now the dream is coming true. I feel it is an honor and a privilege to be a part of this special day.” The purchase of the Jensen Property, located just over the drawbridge on the north side of the Black River in South Haven, adjoins the current Museum campus. The Museum leases its existing property from the City of South Haven. The acquisition of the Jensen Property doubles the size of the Museum campus and secures the Museum’s place at the center of the Maritime District.

The event took place at the historic property October 1, 2020 at 2 PM. The celebration was much smaller than the Museum had intended due to the pandemic. The Jensen Family, Museum staff, Board Members, Museum Campaign Committee Members, and State and City officials were in attendance to mark the occasion. Museum Board of Trustees President Brian Bosgraaf and Executive Director Patti Reinert gave a brief presentation followed by the presentation of a final check to the Jensen Family for \$1,350,000. The property was purchased for a total of \$1.6 million. The funds for the purchase were raised entirely through donation efforts towards the Museum’s on-going Launching a Legacy capital campaign.



The \$8 million campaign for the Museum was started in 2019 with a finish date of the project in the spring of 2022. The scope of the project includes the Jensen Property purchase, a new 2-story main facility, additional buildings, indoor and outdoor event spaces, docks, and shoreline work throughout. The campaign was set to go public this year, but COVID-19 forced a pause to fundraising efforts. The adjusted timeline now sees the Museum’s project completed in the spring of 2023. The purchase of the Jensen Property was included in the first phase of the Museum’s expansion plan and is right on schedule. “Taking ownership of this property is an incredible step for the project as a whole,” says Reinert. “Today, we can show our supporters, current and future, as well as our

community that this project is really happening. We're preserving and protecting a historic waterfront and moving forward towards a new future Museum."



The location of the former Jensen's Fishery, the Jensen Property has a long history of Great Lakes maritime heritage. The property, along with the existing Museum campus, boasts a history that goes back at least 150 years. The expansion of the Museum property and proposed development/restoration of the shoreline is a major step forward for the growth of the Museum, but also for the guaranteed preservation of historically significant waterfront. "The South Haven harbor is world renowned because of its authenticity and beauty, it is one of the best beach

and harbor towns on the Great Lakes. The Museum has, for decades, one of its core values to protect the harbor's scenic beauty. With this acquisition of the Jensen property and water frontage, the Michigan Maritime Museum is going to restore this historic fishing operation point into a sustainable working waterfront while keeping it open and real," says Brian Bosgraaf, Museum Board of Trustees President. "I believe that the view from our city's drawbridge will become an iconic image enjoyed for generations."

The next steps for the Museum will be to combat the high-water issues that have created challenges across the Great Lakes for the last couple of years. Rising water levels have significantly flooded areas of the property making them unusable. The Museum plans to raise the property levels out of the floodplain as well as make improvements to the shoreline and property drainage. While the Museum project is underway, the existing docks will not be suitable for boats. *Elsie J.*, the Jensen's historic fish tug they run as a charter boat, will remain under the ownership of the Jensens and continue to operate from the Museum docks in the future. "The Jensens have been wonderful neighbors and continuing to see *Elsie J.* coming and going from the docks as she's done since 1945, just makes sense," says Reinert.



"Hearing her horn and the sound of her engine at that historic property is truly authentic. It's an immersive experience every visitor to the Museum can truly appreciate."

Under the ownership of the Museum, public access to the historic waterfront will increase and the site will showcase exhibits related to commercial fishing, recreational boating activities, and other maritime cultural and natural heritage topics. There is no question as to the historical significance of this piece of property and what it means for the Museum to have purchased it. This monumental day for the Museum and South Haven protects valuable waterfront real estate and navigational infrastructure from private development, preserving the genuine harbor look and feel that has been so important to the community. “The City of South Haven is pleased to see further expansion of a critical organization in the harbor,” said City Manager Kate Hosier. “The Museum’s commitment to education on our shared maritime heritage and ability to provide experiences on the water adds to the character and significance of the South Haven harbor.” When asked how they felt about the sale of the property that has been in their family for three generations the Jensens said, “We knew we wanted the property to go to the Museum when we decided to sell it. The Museum will take good care of the property and keep our family’s history of commercial fishing alive long after we’re gone. We think our father and grandfather would be proud of what we’ve done.” The Jensen legacy will live on.

The Michigan Maritime Museum is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the rich heritage of Michigan’s Great Lakes and waterways. The Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information about the Museum call 269-637-8078 or visit www.michiganmaritimemuseum.org.