

Saginaw

Today I would like to introduce Tokushima City's sister city: Saginaw, Michigan. Saginaw is a city consisting of approximately 48,000 people and is located in the middle portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It is a part of Saginaw County, which also includes the cities of Frankenmuth and Zilwaukee. Saginaw is filled with some interesting places and treasures if you know the right places to look.

History

Before French missionaries began to arrive around the 17th century, the area of Saginaw was originally inhabited by Native American tribes such as the Ojibwe. In fact, some say the name "Saginaw" comes from the Ojibwe language and means "where the Sauk were", referring to the Sauk Native Americans who lived there prior to being driven out by the Ojibwe. Others say it comes from the Ojibwe word meaning "place of outlet".

After establishing a fur-trading post in 1816, more settlers from Europe began to arrive in Saginaw. As the nation continued to grow, there was an increased need for lumber. Saginaw eventually became a major supplier, utilizing the Saginaw River to help transport the lumber. At one point in time, Saginaw was known as the "lumber capital of the world", however, the lumber industry severely decreased by the end of the 19th century.

In those days, Saginaw was actually divided into 2 parts: Saginaw City, and East Saginaw. It wasn't until 1889 that the 2 parts would officially come together and be known as one single "Saginaw".

Geography

Being a city in Michigan, Saginaw of course has a connection to water. There are a few rivers that can be found in Saginaw, including the Shiawassee River, the Tittabawassee River, and of course the Saginaw River. Additionally, the Saginaw Bay is located within one of the great lakes: Lake Huron.

There are also areas such as the Shiawassee Wildlife Reserve which contains approximately 10,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forests, marshes, and

grasslands. (This area is also designated as an “Important Bird Area” where you are able to view birds such as Canadian geese and great egrets.)

Industry

Although once known for its prosperous lumbering industry, nowadays Saginaw’s main industries include advanced manufacturing and technology. Like many other cities in Michigan, Saginaw also has a deeply rooted connection with the automotive industry.

However, agriculture is also an important industry, with approximately 64% of Saginaw County’s land being used for agricultural purposes. Corn and sugar beets are just some of the agricultural products produced there. Naturally, you can visit the farmers markets located in Saginaw if you are interested in trying some of this fresh produce for yourself.

Education & International Exchange

There are only a few universities located in Saginaw, including Saginaw Valley State University and Delta College. Since 1981, Saginaw Valley State University and Shikoku University have been engaged in various international exchange activities, including sending exchange students, staff exchanges, and collaborative research.

Japanese Cultural Center & Tea House



Saginaw and Tokushima City became sister cities in 1961. This was thanks to a Japanese exchange student from Tokushima who had stayed with a host family in Saginaw.

In 1971, a friendship garden was constructed in Saginaw. The garden features stone lanterns, bamboo gates, cherry trees, a gazebo, and a beautiful bridge settled over a small stream. Visitors are free to come and explore the Japanese-style garden, and it's the perfect place to enjoy some peace and quiet in the presence of nature.



In 1986, the *Awa Saginaw An* tea house, designed by architect Tsutomu Takenaka, was established as a symbol of friendship between the two cities. This was made possible by donations from citizens of both Tokushima and Saginaw. Part of the foundation rests on American soil, and the other part on Japanese soil, and the center is jointly operated.



The tea house is still open today, and gives visitors a chance to experience Japan's traditional tea ceremony in Michigan. Furthermore, there are occasionally other events held there relating to Japanese culture, such as calligraphy and origami. According to the Cultural Center's website, their goal is to "promote intercultural understanding and peace through a bowl of tea." This tea house is also known as one of the most authentic tea houses located in the United States.