

Historical Marker - S718C - West Michigan Pike / West Michigan Pike (Marker ID#:S718C)



Front - Title/Description

West Michigan Pike

At the turn of the twentieth century, deep ruts and sand made West Michigan roads nearly impassable. In 1911, the West Michigan Lakeshore Highway Association was founded to promote the construction of the first improved highway along Lake Michigan in order to bring auto tourists from Chicago to Michigan to support the new resort industry that grew up when logging ended in the region. Completed in 1922, the West Michigan Pike extended from the Indiana state line to Mackinaw City. It was designated one of the first state trunk lines (M-11) in 1917, as part of the Dixie Highway in 1923, and incorporated into the nation's first federal highway system as US-31 in 1926. Straightened and realigned over the years, it is also known as the Red Arrow and the Blue Star Memorial Highways.

Significant Date:

Industry and Invention (1875-1915)

Registry Year: 2009 **Erected Date:** 2009

Marker Location

Address: 590 North Whittaker Street

City: New Buffalo

State: MI **ZipCode:**

County: Berrien

Township: New Buffalo

Lat: 41.79956500 / **Long:** -86.74777100

Web URL:

Back - Title/Description

West Michigan Pike

The West Michigan Pike, advertised as "Lake Shore All the Way Chicago to Mackinaw," was completed as a paved highway in 1922. Tourists, particularly those from Chicago who sought cooler temperatures by coming to Michigan, gained greater access to communities dotting the Lake Michigan shore between the Indiana state line and the Straits of Mackinac. In 1926 the pike (M-11) was designated US-31. By then, traffic congestion and poor road conditions were again impeding travel. The West Michigan Pike Association, which had started the road, advocated for US-31 to be widened and rerouted in 1929 as a "superhighway." A full-blown tourism industry with lodging, restaurants, and attractions grew up along the West Michigan Pike and flourished into the twenty-first century.