

LET'S GO! TRAVEL



CROSSROADS VILLAGE

Holiday sparkle: Lights decorate trees in front of the Coldwater Road Chapel at Crossroads Village & Huckleberry Railroad in Flint.

Village shines during holidays

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

The magic of a 19th century holiday sparkles through the streets and structures at Crossroads Village and Huckleberry Railroad.

Slip away from the Christmas frenzy and head to Flint. Musical groups, horsedrawn wagon rides, costumed craftspeople and more than 300,000 glittering lights create a dramatic winter-wonderland. The village is located just north of Flint off I-475 at Exit 13.

A stroll through Crossroads begins on Main Street, where several restored 1800s-era buildings stand. Step inside the General Store to browse. The shelves are crammed with jams, jellies, spices, scented soaps and replicas of children's antique books and toys.

"A Country Christmas" is performed several times each evening at the Colwell Opera House.

Last minute Christmas shoppers should visit the Village Christmas Shop across the street for holiday decorations, ornaments, gifts and collectibles.

Tell the kids to be on the lookout for Frosty the Snowman as he walks the village paths greeting visitors. Of course, Santa's at the township hall to listen to your wish list.

Throughout the village costumed interpreters demonstrate their weaving, woodworking and broom making skills. Take a walk down Park Street; you'll probably find a blacksmith working in his 1800s-era shop. Children are invited to join the ornament-making party at the one-room Stanley School. Ask the grade schoolers in the group how they would feel if their teacher lived with their family — not unusual in the 1800s.

"I wouldn't like it at all," eight-year-old Jason said. Excuses for incomplete homework might be difficult to explain.

Early medical instruments and medicinal herbs highlight the office of Dr. J.E. Barbour, a 1800s-era Indiana physician. Help the kids compare some of the medical advancements of the last 100 years.

Pet the sheep and cows at Calkins Barn. Or check out the Fowler Barber Shop. For twenty-five cents customers could get a trim.

An original 1878 vault sits in the corner of the T. N. North & Sons Bank. Prosperous lumber and fur industry patrons kept bank tellers busy.

For a fee enjoy the village from a wagon pulled by horses. Weather permitting, the Venetian swings — self-propelled boats for kids and adults — and a 1910 Parker Superior Wheel present wintery carnival thrills.

Hold on! The 1912 Parker Carousel circles the platform at a rapid pace. Hand-carved

jumping horses and music from an antique Artisan band organ encourage giggles from the riders. Weather is not a factor as the carousel is completely enclosed in a heated building.

All aboard! A steam-powered 1920 Baldwin locomotive pulls passengers along a narrow-gauge track. Peek through the windows as the engine chugs slowly over a section of the mid-1800s Pere Marquette Railroad. The eight-mile scenic trip includes lighted dancing reindeer, giant snowmen, a 50-foot toy train and an animated riverboat.

For a snack, light meal or hot drinks, try the Crossroads Cafe or the Mill Street Warehouse. Buffet-style dinners of roast beef and baked chicken are served in the Mill Street Dining Room.

Dinners are \$8.50 for adults, \$4.25 for children 12 years and under and free for three and younger.

"We encourage visitors to purchase tickets in advance for both the train ride and dinner," said Janet Weaver of the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission.

Adult tickets to the village and railroad are \$6.95; seniors 60 and up are \$5.95; children ages 4-12 are \$4.75; and children three and younger are free.

Remember, to avoid disappointment call ahead. For more information, dinner reservations and advance tickets, call 1-(800) 648-PARK weekdays.

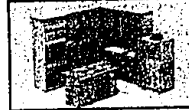
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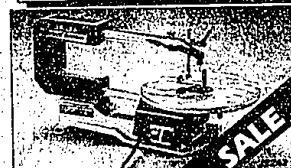
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Family enjoyed Festival of Lights

If you're looking for something fun to do during the holidays, visit the Festival of Lights in Battle Creek suggests the Cauley Family of Livonia.

Binder Zoo and downtown Battle Creek are lit up with thousands of tiny lights this time of year. The Cauleys said they enjoyed walking amongst the lights while viewing many animals in their night habitat.

On the way home you can get your Christmas tree at one of the many "cut your own" Christmas tree farms.

A lot of Battle Creek area hotels are offering "Festival of Lights" weekend packages. The festival runs from November through December. For information, call (616) 968-1515.



Enjoyable weekend: The Cauley Family, Gerry (left to right), Linda, Stacey and Brittany of Livonia in Battle Creek at the Festival of Lights.

Take your Observer on vacation

Thank you for sharing your vacation photos with us. We're trying to get in as many as we can. If your photo hasn't appeared in Let's Go! yet, don't fret, it will!

It's fun to share news about your family vacation with friends and neighbors by sending photos to the Observer.

To be considered, take your Observer newspaper on vacation and

snap a photograph of your family holding the newspaper in a scenic spot. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope if you would like the photos returned to you.

We'll print as many photos as space allows each week. Photos will be returned shortly after publication. Send photos and travel recom-

mendations to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. For more information, call (313) 953-2105.

We're also looking for recommendations for good places to go with families — overnight, for a weekend or week. What's your favorite winter getaway? Is it some place warm or cold?

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