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*Northern Michigan University*

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A MUSEUM FOR NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

a report prepared by  
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Williamston, Michigan

for  
NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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## A MUSEUM FOR NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

The author was asked to come to Marquette as a consultant and advisor to the university. The purpose of the visit was to examine several buildings, to review the goals and the requirements of the various departments which have expressed an interest in the museum as an adjunct to their departmental activities, and to present recommendations to Northern Michigan's Board of Trustees. The visit was made on April 15 and 16, 1974. The following report is respectfully submitted in compliance to that charge.

In its broadest terms, a museum is more than a room full of displays and more than a "dead zoo". As used herein, the word museum encompasses the totality of museum facilities, functions and aspirations, specifically as they relate to the academic and public role of the museum as a part of NMU.

In the course of the visit, discussions were held with staff and faculty representatives of the university. They openly and eloquently expressed their goals, desires and opinions as they related to their areas of responsibility. It is not the purpose of this report to review and evaluate the proposed programs; they will be defined separately by the representatives themselves. The programs which were discussed all offer exciting possibilities for extending the university's academic and outreach programs to better serve the people of the Upper Peninsula. The requirements and conditions imposed by the proposed use have been incorporated into the recommendations and considerations of alternatives presented below.

### Projected Museum Program Requirements

The University of Michigan and Michigan State University have active university museum programs. In both instances, they occupy older buildings with little or no opportunity to expand within their existing buildings. The Exhibit Museum, at the U. of M, contains about 28,000 sq. ft. of space which includes exhibit preparation space. Other museums at the U of M include: a herbarium, a museum of ancient and mediaeval archeology, a museum of anthropology, a museum of zoology, and an art museum. In addition, the area is served by: a planetarium, an arboretum, a botanical garden and a historical society museum. The total space allocated to these functions is not presently known. Michigan State University may offer a more comparable situation, in that the museum functions there are relatively

new and the university museum activities are not so diversified. The Museum contains approximately 38,400 sq. ft., of which about 1,200 are occupied by the telephone system. Of the remaining 37,200 sq. ft., about 60% is devoted to public exhibits. In addition, the Museum has approximately 10,000 sq. ft. of storage in the stadium to house the historical collections. Michigan State University has an art gallery of moderate proportions, a herbarium, a planetarium with about 4,500 sq. ft. of exhibit space, and a botanical garden. The entire campus is considered as an arboretum.

The multitude of programs envisioned by the university representatives, encompassing art, history, natural and environmental science, anthropology, and public service would require approximately 40,000 sq. feet of space, of which about 20,000 sq. ft. would be needed as an initial phase, with the additional space as a firm commitment to accommodate future growth. Of this, following a general rule of university museums, something less than half would be devoted to public exhibition space.

Public exhibition areas represent a unique aspect of the university museum. Such a facility, while providing a valuable educational tool for university classes, serves as one of the primary "image builders" for the university. Exhibits constitute one of the most visible "faces" of the institution. Few prospective students, parents or alumni take the opportunity to visit language labs or libraries. They do visit the museum. Their opinions of the institution are largely dependent upon the quality of the exhibits--and the success of the football team.

Public exhibition areas, therefore, should not be "forced" into inadequate space in inappropriate locations. The space should be open, clean, and preferably one one floor, with easy access for the elderly and handicapped. The exhibits therein should be of highest quality--both in their design and execution and in their content as well. Exhibition space, particularly if "outreach" programs are envisioned, should not exceed the capacity of the staff to maintain the displays and establish a changing or rotating exhibit program.

Other public spaces are necessary in an active museum program. Classrooms for special, museum-oriented, university level programs, as well as facilities for the multitudes of public school groups who seek out such extra-mural curriculum extensions, should be available as integral parts of the museum--not provided on a catch-as-catch-can basis.

Curatorial spaces, to use the broadest term, include office and research areas as well as specifically equipped areas to house existing and anticipated collections. In some cases special air tempering and conditioning systems are required to conserve the collections.

Exhibition and conservation shops and laboratories are an essential part of an active museum program. It is desirable, but not absolutely necessary, that such facilities be located in conjunction with the display areas and curatorial spaces.

Museum space is flexible, however. Museums have been created in the most unlikely places--in old houses, in flour mills--even in the holds of ships--but the success of a museum and its programs is enhanced by the space it occupies. Successful museum programs are very effective educational tools. Therefore, the university should seriously consider providing the best possible physical facilities to accommodate the programs which are planned.

#### Building Selection

Three university buildings were examined as potential sites for the museum facilities: Longyear Hall, Lee Hall and the University Center.

##### Longyear Hall--

This structure represents the sole surviving representative of the university's original buildings. As such, there are strong arguments in favor of its preservation as a historic resource. If its preservation could be effected through adaptation to a viable use, the university and the area would be well served. A number of conditions exist which diminish the suitability of the structure as a museum:

##### 1. Space and expansion potential--

The building contains 24,400 sq. ft., of which only 15,000 are assignable to use, on four floors.

The available area would be inadequate for planned museum use.

Expansion into Pierce Hall is possible, but difficult, and such assignment is unlikely.

##### 2. Condition--

A serious structural fault exists in that the exterior facade has separated from the structure of the building. Repair would be expensive.

The building lacks adequate, approved stairs and has no elevator.

Electrical and mechanical equipment is substandard.

### 3. Visual impact--

While the building fronts the primary access to the university grounds and it presents an interesting and imposing facade, it is visually isolated from the university and its activities.

### 4. Vehicular parking and pedestrian access--

Planned visitor parking is not available immediately adjacent to the facility. Conflicts with staff and student parking demands would be encountered when the new administration building is completed.

Service access is poor.

Pedestrian access is difficult from campus center activities.

### 5. Cost of renovation and development--

Cost estimates in excess of \$39 per sq. ft. have been made for the restoration of the structure.

It is assumed that 40% of the gross area would be developed as public display areas at an estimated cost of \$20 per sq. ft.

TOTAL TENTATIVE COST PROJECTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LONGYEAR HALL. . . \$1,143,000

The limitations and costs of using Longyear Hall as a university museum are such that the author could not recommend further consideration of the structure as a potential home for museum activities. However, it is strongly suggested that, in view of its value as a historic resource, every effort should be made to find an alternative use to effect its preservation. A faculty club has been suggested as one such alternative. The cost of renovation is high, but when compared to the cost of new construction its feasibility is enhanced.

### Lee Hall--

#### 1. Space and expansion potential--

Lee Hall contains a gross area of 43,000 sq. ft., and an assignable area of 29,000 sq. ft.

This space is on four floors, but the bulk of the space is on the first and second floors. If this space were to be assigned to museum use, it should adequately meet the needs of the university for years to come. However, the immediate needs of the museum would not require or impose full utilization of the space.

Development of all museum functions within an integrated space would be highly desirable.

2. Condition--

Lee Hall appears to be, structurally, in sound condition. The interior has been remodeled extensively and is currently a warren of offices and work spaces. There is only one approved stair and no public elevator which serves all floors. Extensive interior modification would be necessary to adapt the building to museum use. Electric service is adequate, but some new wiring would be necessary. Mechanical services are in need of repair and some new distributive systems would be necessary.

3. Visual impact--

Lee Hall is probably the building which has the dubious honor of being NMU's ugliest permanent building--a condition which is aggravated by its incrustation of inappropriate signs. If the building were to be used as the university museum, tastefully designed, cosmetic alteration of the facade should be considered, both to improve the appearance and to visually separate the structure from the dormitories which flank it. Lee Hall is ideally located to accommodate its joint academic and public functions. It is a visually integrated element of campus-related activities.

4. Vehicular parking and pedestrian access--

Of the buildings considered, Lee Hall is the one most closely related to the pedestrian circulation patterns of the campus plan. The problems of vehicular access and parking pose some problems. Minimal existing and planned parking would act as a deterrent for public use. Service access is excellent. The use of Lee Hall as a museum may pose a conflict with the new building planned for the site.

5. Cost or renovation and development--

If the entire gross area of Lee Hall were to be renovated, we could anticipate renovation costs of approximately \$16 per sq. ft., or \$688,000. Assuming 40% of the space for exhibits, \$344,000 would be required for exhibits and displays. Estimated costs for total development of \$1,032,000 would seem to be excessive. If less than the total available space were to be made immediately available, the initial costs would be reduced. However, total renovation is necessary and must be assumed by the university, unless the decision to demolish the building is made. For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that 50% of the building would be converted to museum use as the initial phase of development. If less than the total space is assigned, a firm committment should be made for the use of the space as museum programs develop.

TENTATIVE COST PROJECTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF LEE HALL. . . . .	Phase One	\$516,000
	Future Development	<u>516,000</u>
		\$1,032,000



## University Center--(upper floor of the south wing only)

### 1. Space and expansion potential--

The area immediately available totals approximately 15,000 sq. ft.

In light of projected needs this would seem to discourage assignment of the space to museum use.

Museum needs for office and curatorial space, while desirably integrated with the museum facilities, need not be a direct adjunct of the more public facilities.

Space in other parts of the University Center will become available upon completion of the new administration building. This space would be suitable to museum use with little or no modification.

The expansion potential to meet anticipated needs may, in the nearfuture, be made possible by an anticipated decrease in food service space requirements engendered by the conversion of dormitories to apartments.

As with Lee Hall, if less than the projected 40,000 sq. ft. of space is initially assigned, a firm planning committment should be made to provide additional space as it becomes available.

### 2. Condition--

As one of the newer buildings of the campus, the structure is in very good condition with few mechanical and electrical problems to complicate adaptation to museum use.

Non-bearing walls could easily be removed to create adequate public display spaces. Little modification would be necessary to adapt other spaces to curatorial use.

### 3. Visual impact--

While the south entrance of the University Center would not relate to its campus center role quite as well as it would in Lee Hall, there are compensating factors which should be considered.

The south entrance to the Center is located at the end of a primary access street to the heart of the university.

The main building constitutes a tasteful, contemporary focal point for visitors to the university.

### 4. Vehicular parking and pedestrian access--

Of the sites considered, the University Center can provide adequate, non-competitive visitor parking, particularly when administrative functions are removed to the new building.

Service access, though shared with other functions of the Center, is excellent.

Pedestrian access, at the south entrance, is somewhat removed from campus center activity, but there is a strong possibility of developing an interior entrance to the museum from the main entrance to the Center--which does have a strong relationship to the planned pedestrian routes.

## 5. Cost of renovation and development--

Consideration of costs for development must, as with Lee Hall, include some assumptions of initial and future space requirements.

If we assume that 20,00 sq. ft. would be needed for first phase development, some office and curatorial space would need to be provided in addition to that contained in the south wing. Such space would require no major modification.

It is assumed that, in the interests of creating a "public image" for the museum, a major portion of the south wing would be used for exhibit areas.

About 20% of the available space would need no remodeling.

Remodeling costs have been estimated to cost \$10 per sq. ft. for 12,000 sq. ft. of display area.

The installation of exhibits is estimated to cost \$20 per sq. ft.. or \$240,000.

TENTATIVE COST PROJECTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY CENTER. .Phase One:	\$360,000
	Future Development <u>360,000</u>
	\$720,000

## SUMMARY

The author is committed to one firm recommendation: that Longyear Hall, though eminently worthy of preservation, is not suitable for use as a university museum. The other buildings are, in the opinion of the author, a "toss-up". In view of the short-range and long-range costs, there is a temptation to recommend the selection of the University Center, but the hazard exists that the university museum may get "stuck" in less than adequate space. The cost of renovating or replacing Lee Hall cannot be avoided, regardless of the decision now made. In that case, the cost of developing a museum would be about equal in either structure.

The decision, then, is up to the staff and faculty of Northern Michigan University. Whatever building is selected to house the museum functions, the people of the Upper Peninsula will benefit. At present, no major museums exist in this neglected area to serve its thousands of citizens. It is hoped that we will soon see one established at Marquette.