



PRESS RELEASE

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HOLLYWOOD ACTOR/WEST MICHIGAN NATIVE TONI TRUCKS DEDICATES NEW MANISTEE HISTORIC SITES TOURS

*CBS "SEAL Team" Actor Provided Voice-Over for Videos for Most Comprehensive Tourism Project in
Manistee County Highlighting more than 100 Historic Sites*

MANISTEE, Mich. – May 8, 2018 – Hollywood came to Manistee this week, as Manistee native and television/film actor Toni Trucks officially dedicated the [Manistee Historic Sites Tours](#) to community leaders and media at the [Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts](#), along with representatives from the [Manistee County Visitors Bureau](#) (MCVB) and [Manistee County Historical Museum](#).

Spearheaded by the MCVB with close collaboration from the Manistee County Historical Museum, the Manistee Historic Sites Tours is the county's most comprehensive tourism project in history, showcasing more than 100 historic sites through eight themed tours. Supported by a \$50,000 grant from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development and \$70,000 from the MCVB, the MCVB created the self-guided routes with accompanying guide book, map and mobile app with links to videos and images on the [bureau's website](#).

CBS *Seal Team* actor Toni Trucks provided the voice-overs for more than 20 videos narrating Manistee's most prominent historic sites, with the [1:44 minute video about the Ramsdell Theatre](#) shown on a screen to the audience at the event. At the conclusion, Toni Trucks and MCVB Executive Director Kathryn Kenny pulled a drape off of a new tour sign to be placed in the Manistee County Historical Museum, the starting point for the eight tours.

"Today is the culmination of a project that dates back to 2011 when it was just a kernel of an idea," said Kenny. "When we looked at Manistee's brand assets, our rich history is one of the primary draws for visitors. Yet many of our most treasured buildings are private homes and businesses. This new Manistee Historic Sites Tour gives people an inside glimpse through videos and photos of these fascinating historic treasures."

Opening the event was Xavier Verna, executive director of the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, who welcomed the audience and explained the significance of the Ramsdell for Toni Trucks, who got her acting start there at age 7. Kathryn Kenny described the project and how it was possible because of partnerships. Also speaking was Mark Fedder, executive director of the Manistee County Historical Museum, who identified and cataloged the 100 sites on the tour. On a personal note, he went to Manistee High School with Toni Trucks and introduced her. Toni Trucks was the final speaker, sharing what it meant for her to do this project and her hopes for the tour and Manistee.

"I am so thrilled to provide the audio narration of the Manistee Historic Sites Tours," said Toni Trucks, who came to Manistee this week specifically to dedicate the tours. "It feels like my hometown love has come full circle. Growing up in Manistee, I was completely enamored by the elaborate Victorian architecture that dominates the area. Manistee is flush with beautiful buildings with the breathtaking Michigan shoreline as a backdrop – and it has a rich, complex history to match. It is such an incredible honor to help educate people further on this jewel that I proudly call home."

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Eight Themed Tours Tell Manistee's History

The MCVB officially began the Historic Tours project in 2014 and then applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 grant from USDA Rural Development – the highest level awarded in its annual grant cycle. The MCVB partnered with the Manistee County Historical Museum, who identified more than 100 sites across the county with historic significance for the tours and organized them into the eight themed tours, with fifteen of the sites on the National Register of Historic Places (including more than 50 sites in one designation - Downtown Manistee) and 20 are on the list of Michigan State Historic Sites. The 25 most prominent sites feature an accompanying video voiced-over by Toni Trucks, with other sites visually represented through photos. Following are the tours:

- [Churches](#)
- [Downtown /Commercial District](#)
- [Destination Sites](#)
- [East Homes](#)
- [West Homes](#)
- [Industrial Sites](#)
- [Museums](#)
- [Riverwalk Sites](#)

“Manistee may be the first county in Michigan to showcase its historic assets to this level of depth and detail,” said Mark Fedder, executive director of the Manistee County Historical Museum. “It’s important to document these buildings not just from a tourism angle, but from an historic preservation angle as well. When you see these residences, churches and buildings, you discover their beauty and craftsmanship and learn how Manistee residents used to live and work. And they may not always be here – if something happens, we will have them documented.”

The MCVB collaborated with more than 10 area agencies to create the Manistee County Historic Sites Tours, including the Manistee County Historical Museum, private contractors and creative agencies, and community activists. Brandon Jensen, owner and creative director of RightSide Design in Manistee, wrote the USDA grant on behalf of the MCVB, and his firm designed the website, mobile app, map and printed guide book. MyNorth Media in Traverse City wrote the video scripts, and Kris Riley with Kris Riley Productions produced the videos.

Other News Announcement – James Earl Jones Provides Welcome Message at Ramsdell

Xavier Verna, executive director of the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, also announced news about *another* famous actor from Manistee County who got started at the Ramsdell and is known for vocal talent – James Earl Jones. Jones recorded a 30-second spot that will be played at the beginning of every Ramsdell production, making the Ramsdell the only theater in America with an audio greeting by James Earl Jones. Known most famously as the voice of Darth Vader, Jones got his acting start at the Ramsdell in high school in a production of *Othello*. The audience at the May 8 event heard only the second public playing of the recording.

About Toni Trucks

Born in Grand Rapids and raised in Manistee, Trucks stars as Lisa Davis in the hit television series *SEAL Team* on CBS and well as in a recurring role in *Corporate* on Comedy Central. Other television credits include *Franklin and Bash*, *Made In Jersey*, *NCIS: New Orleans*, *Grimm*, *Hostages* and *Do No Harm*. Her film credits include *Ruby Sparks*, *Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part 2* and *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, plus the short film, *Good Eggs*. An alumna of both Interlochen Arts Academy and the University of Michigan’s Musical Theatre Program, Trucks returns to West Michigan from her home in L.A. regularly to participate in community activities, from co-anchoring the Manistee Victorian Sleighbell Parade, to hosting a live screening last September for the premiere night of *SEAL Team* at Manistee's Vogue Theatre.

About the Manistee County Visitors Bureau

Incorporated in 1997, the Manistee County Visitors Bureau (MCVB) is the official travel and tourism organization to promote Manistee County as a travel destination and build the local tourism economy through overnight visits. The MCVB is a partner in the Pure Michigan campaign and member of the West Michigan Tourist Association, Circle Michigan, Michigan Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Michigan Lodging & Tourism Association and the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce. Visit visitmanisteecounty.com.

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