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FEATURE STORY

As an Educator: REMEMBERING A MICHIGAN PRESIDENT

by Clay Pelon

With the recent passing of the 38th President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford, interest in his life and period of office has been heightened.

For those seeking more detail and a rewarding experience, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum offers resources for educators both varied and extensive. In combination with primary source archives, the museum offers many interactive exhibits that draw the viewer into the era and the conflicts of the time.

Barbara McGregor Packer, Education Specialist, has many ways to assist teachers in weaving curriculum standards into a visit to the museum. "The Museum's primary resource, of course, is our permanent exhibit. With ten distinct galleries, we use Gerald Ford's life and career of public service to illustrate the workings of our government." Also available are curriculum materials to utilize in conjunction with both the Museum's permanent and changing exhibits, guided tours, teacher workshops, distance learning capability, and web site featuring documents and photographs from the holdings of the Gerald R. Ford Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The goal of the museum, to "allow visitors to participate in history, not just view it, while reviewing the highlights of the lives of

President and Mrs. Ford," has created an experience that suits students need of informative and interactive experiences.


One of the immersive exhibits is the replica Cabinet Room of the White House. This room has been faithfully recreated as it appeared in 1974. Students can participate in three critical decisions of the Ford Administration: the pardon of former President Richard Nixon, the seizure of the *USS Mayaguez*, and the New York City financial crisis. High school and college students are able to explore Gerald Ford's pardon of President Richard Nixon in a document-based program which elaborates on the interactive Cabinet Room scenario.

Barbara added, "In addition to our permanent exhibits and theatrical performances for school groups, our changing exhibits are very popular with K-12 and college groups. Currently on display is *Slavery on Trial: The Long Road to Freedom*. To compliment the exhibit we have an extensive curriculum packet, teacher workshop—"Teaching Slavery" co-sponsored with Grand Valley State University's History Department, and an array of school, family, and public programming."

The most popular school programs, according to Kristin Mooney, Public Affairs Specialist for the museum, is the main gallery tour for elementary groups and the "Pardon

of Richard Nixon Tour" for middle and high school students.

Kristin also handles reservations for schools and groups seeking to visit the museum. For group reservations please contact her at kristin.mooney@nara.gov or by calling (616) 254-0374.

More resources for the classroom are available at www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov. Primary source materials, photos, biographies and online displays are all available. 

Above: Entrance to the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids. Inset: President and Mrs. Ford. Below: Replica of the Cabinet Room of the White House as it appeared in 1974

