

Historical Marker - S677 - Origins of the Salt Industry / State Salt Well No. 1 (Marker ID#:S677)



Front - Title/Description

Origins of the Salt Industry

Michigan's early white settlers used salt for preserving fish and other foods, curing meats, and tanning hides as well as for cooking. Prior to statehood, salt was shipped from New York. Recognizing the importance of salt resources, delegates to the May 11, 1835, state constitutional convention provided for state control of salt springs and salt lands in an article submitted to Congress with the constitution. In 1837 when the Michigan legislature met for the first time, it established the state Geological Survey and appointed Douglass Houghton state geologist, a post he held until his death in 1845. Houghton was the first to officially record many of the state's geological resources, including salt, copper, iron, coal, and gypsum.

Significant Date:

Statehood Era (1815-1860)

Registry Year: 2002 **Erected Date:** 2002

Marker Location

Address: Maple Street and West Saginaw

City: Sanford

State: MI **ZipCode:**

County: Midland

Township: Jerome

Lat: 43.67280700 / **Long:** -84.38439800

Web URL:

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State Salt Well No. 1

Douglass Houghton, Michigan's first state geologist, considered the salt springs on the Tittabawassee River the best prospect for development because of the quality of dissolved salt. Houghton believed that salt rock existed at a depth of 500 to 700 feet and that boring into the rock would increase the salt content of the spring water. In June 1838 the state began drilling near here, one-half mile below the mouth of the Salt River. Hindered by primitive living conditions, worker illness, and equipment failure, the four-year effort ended when the drill could not penetrate a boulder at 139 feet. This was the first attempt in an industry that placed Michigan as a leading salt producer in the United States.