

CELL BLOCK 7 PRISON MUSEUM TO CLOSE PERMANENTLY

3225 Fourth Street, Jackson, MI – November 12, 2019 – The Ella Sharp Museum is saddened to announce the permanent closing of our satellite museum, Cell Block 7. Final day of operation will be December 29, 2019. Over the course of five years, Cell Block 7 shared Jackson's prison history with more than 35,000 visitors from all over the world.

"We're grateful for our partnership with the Ella Sharp Museum that led to the operation of Cell Block 7 as a place for visitors to learn more about the history, programs and operations of state correctional facilities in Jackson," said Heidi Washington, Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections.

The Ella Sharp Museum opened Cell Block 7 in 2014. Operating in two buildings at the State Prison of Southern Michigan outside of Jackson, the museum includes a decommissioned cell-block and small adjacent building. Visitors explored exhibits about the history of the prison, entered prison cells, and learned about how and why prison life has changed since the prison's construction. Citing operational struggles including decreasing financial support, staffing, and maintenance challenges, the Ella Sharp Museum board made the difficult decision to close the Cell Block 7 Museum permanently.

"This decision has been difficult for all of the Ella Sharp Museum team," said Diane Gutenkauf, Executive Director of Ella Sharp Museum. "We are honored that we had the opportunity to present Jackson's prison history in this unique setting."

Plan your visit now before the end of the year. Hours of operation are Friday through Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Once Cell Block 7 closes, the Ella Sharp Museum, an independent 501(c)3 non-profit, will continue to collect prison artifacts, documents, and photographs and to tell Jackson's prison history through stories, exhibits, and programming.

Ella Sharp Museum is honored to have worked with the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to realize the Cell Block 7 Museum and we would like to thank MDOC, Experience Jackson for Cell Block 7 marketing support, and all of the many community partners who helped make this project a reality.

About the Ella Sharp Museum

The Ella Sharp Museum, founded in 1965, offers programs, exhibits and experiences preserving community history, advancing art appreciation and understanding, connecting children with science and, through the Cell Block 7 Museum, explores Jackson's prison history. Our 6-acre campus includes the Hadwin Center with exhibit galleries, program spaces, rental facilities, and offices; the Merriman Sharp farmhouse, a one-room schoolhouse, a log cabin, barn and other historic structures; and the Hurst Planetarium. Our mission focuses on providing opportunities to connect our community with history, science, and the arts.

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