



# *Fun facts*

## *Michigan license plate trivia*

- Michigan license plates were first issued by individual cities beginning in 1903.
- The Michigan Secretary of State assumed the responsibility of statewide vehicle registration in 1905 with the enactment of Public Act 196.
- Michigan was not the first state to require license plates. That honor goes to New York, which began mandating plates in 1901. On the world stage, however, it was the French who first began issuing license plates – called “number plates” – in 1893.
- Michigan’s early plates were much different than what we see today. From 1905 to 1909, they were simply engraved aluminum discs, which were usually displayed on the dashboard.
- A registration number was added to the disc in 1907. It was the **vehicle owner’s** responsibility to put the registration number on a plate that could be hung from the rear of a vehicle. Owners made plates out of leather, steel, wood or rubber.
- After June 28, 1907, homemade license plates were required on the front and back of a vehicle. National mail-order companies such as Sears Roebuck were selling license plate kits for motorists. That business enterprise lasted until Florida became the last state to issue statewide plates in 1918.
- Michigan issued its first actual license plate in 1910. The plate was made of cast iron and had a glazed-on porcelain-like finish. It also featured the Great Seal of Michigan, though the seal was not officially adopted until 1911.
- The look of Michigan’s plates has varied over the years. Colors have ranged from the traditional blue and white to the less-conventional orange, magenta, maroon, cream, olive, black, light purple, dull silver, light gold, green, gray and chocolate brown. Some of the colors were used to pay tribute to various universities.
- Today, the Secretary of State registers more than 9 million vehicles and trailers.
- Michigan manufactures about 2 million plates a year.
- License plate fees are used for road construction and maintenance.