

Michigan Every Day

By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly

Nov. 13, 1972
Governor buys state's first lottery ticket

Whatever reason the state had when its founding fathers outlawed lotteries in the first state constitution drafted in 1835 were long forgotten by the 1970s when Michigan looked for new revenue sources. Lotteries looked like a good bet to raise money, the constitution was amended, and Governor William G. Milliken bought the first lottery ticket sold in the state on Nov. 13, 1972. The ticket, a loser, was donated to the Michigan Historical Commission. In the days leading up to the lottery, the state-sponsored gambling caused a mild hysteria among residents. Newspaper writers swooned about what was dubbed “the chance of a lifetime.” In Dearborn, which was one of four municipalities given a license to sell lottery tickets, the city voted to let its employees buy the 50-cent lottery tickets through payroll deductions. The measure passed unanimously with Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard saying the idea came to him in “a flash of inspiration – like a girl on first sight.”

When sales of lottery tickets kicked off, more than 7,000 establishments across the state were licensed to sell and lines formed with customers ready to buy a ticket or five. There would be nearly 4,000 winners each week who would take home \$25. Winning the \$25 would enter the ticket-holder into a drawing for \$1 million, which the state promised to hold after it sold 30 million tickets. Lottery money at first was directed into the state's general fund. In 1981, the money was devoted to education, but that did not result in a windfall for schools since legislators allocated less from the general fund for education.