

# Native American Cultural Trail Brings New Features, History to M-185



Digital renderings of the Native American Cultural Trail show the design of the panels in addition to the bicycle parking, benches and landscaping plans. Six panel and parking areas will dot the perimeter of Mackinac Island along M-185 after installation in the Spring of 2016.

The nearly eight miles of motorless highway circumnavigating Mackinac Island is set to get an update this spring. The Native American Cultural Trail will feature six individual panels discussing the history and impact of Native Americans on the island.

"Native American history and culture is not something we actively interpret a great deal on Mackinac Island, currently," said Director Phil Porter. "We hope these new informational panels will educate the public and provide perspective about the pre-contact history, trade, culture and more."

The panels were drafted by Director of Archives and Records for the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians Eric Hemenway with help from Mackinac State Historic Parks staff and will be installed by Mackinac Island State Park operations staff.

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission approved the project in late July 2015 and fundraising through Mackinac Associates began soon after. The expected cost to develop the six stations is \$50,000.

"This is perfectly aligned with what Mackinac Associates is meant to do," said Diane Dombroski, membership coordinator for Mackinac Associates. "Our members were so excited about and generous with this opportunity that we were able to exceed the goal."

In addition to the panels, the areas next to the roadway where they are located will be landscaped and include benches and areas for bicycle parking.

"Biking around the perimeter of the island is a popular activity, but with three-quarters of a million people or more coming to the island every year it can get congested when visitors stop to take photos or admire the scenery," said Porter. "Hopefully the convenience of these bike parking areas will decrease some of that congestion while simultaneously offering an important educational experience."

The panels and areas surrounding them were designed to blend with the natural surroundings so as to not be obtrusive to the island's natural beauty. Utilizing locally familiar products like cedar and limestone will help the panels and parking areas to blend into the environment.

"We're thrilled to see such terrific support for this worthwhile project," said Porter. "This formalized interpretation of centuries of

Native American culture on Mackinac Island will go a long way in promoting both enjoyment and understanding of the island's rich history."

A formal dedication of the trail will be held during the summer.

## New Piece Bound for Mackinac Art Museum

Recently added to the collection, this mezzotint by Reynold Weidenaar is one of three depicting the Mackinac Bridge during its construction.

Recently purchased with funds from the Martin and Patricia Jahn Collections Development Fund.

Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Weidenaar studied at the Kendall School of Design and at the Kansas City Art Institute. In 1944 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship and in 1949, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Scholarship. The quality of his work was recognized by prominent etchers and he quickly received national acclaim through invitational exhibitions at the Smithsonian Institution, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Carnegie Institute. He was a full member of the National Academy of Design.

Weidenaar worked mostly on copper with all the intaglio processes (etching, engraving, drypoint, aquatint, softground, and mezzotint) and produced over 200 prints. Weidenaar was

one of the first artists in the United States to revive the technique of mezzotint printmaking. He also worked in watercolor and resin oils.

This is one of two works completed by Weidenaar of the Mackinac Bridge. It captures the spirit and innovation during the construction of the mighty bridge that immediately became one of Michigan's most enduring symbols.



# Blog Posts Share Stories, Images with Digital Audience

With more than one million artifacts and objects in the Mackinac State Historic Parks' collection, there simply aren't enough spaces throughout the historic sites to display and describe each item.

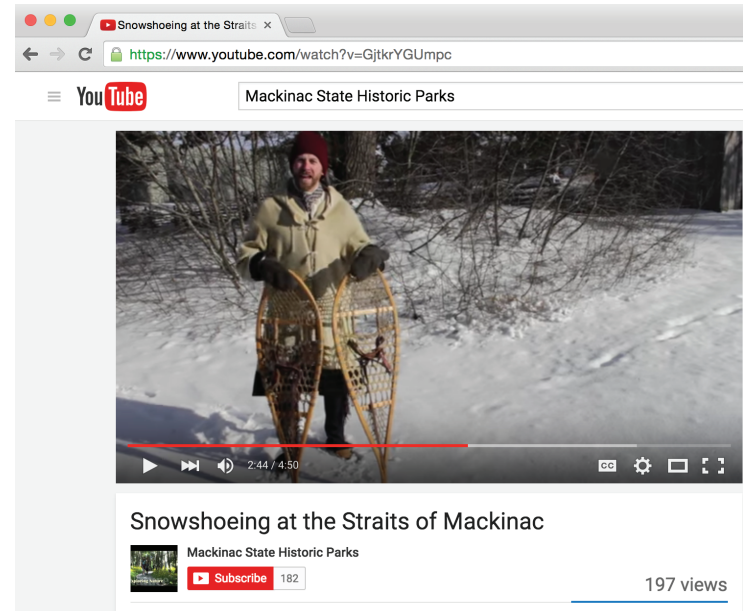
Now, however, we are able to share the objects and the stories they tell with the Mackinac State Historic Parks blog.

Blog posts range in subject from new items accessioned into the collection, historic photographs, natural history, or videos demonstrating the way-of-life for

early people of the region.

"The blog really allows us to go one step further into sometimes unexplored subjects we just don't have the capacity to interpret at our sites currently," said Deputy Director Steve Brisson.

The posts are generated and written by different members of the staff in their various areas of expertise and published on a weekly schedule. Then, the posts are shared via Mackinac State Historic Parks' social media channels like Facebook and Twitter.



"A lot of people don't realize that this history isn't set in stone," said Craig Wilson, museum historian. "We often learn new information or correct old information with research, and the blog is a great way for us to share that new information."

To visit the Mackinac State Historic Parks blog, visit [mackinacparks.com/blog](http://mackinacparks.com/blog)

A recent video from the MSHP blog highlights the similarities between historic snowshoes used at the Straits of Mackinac centuries ago and their modern counterparts, still in regular use in the region today.

# Milkweed Planted to Restore Failing Butterfly Population

More than 400,000 common milkweed seeds were scattered at the five acre meadow at Mackinac Island Airport's east end in an effort to create a habitat for monarch butterflies on the island.

Once densely populated with the familiar orange and black butterflies, the Midwest region of the United States has experienced a tremendous decline in population due to farming pesticides and the destruction of natural habitat.

"The monarch butterfly is reliant on milkweed plants for the first few weeks after their eggs hatch," said Jeff Dykehouse, curator of natural history. "Milkweed is poisonous to many animals, but serves as the sole food source for the young caterpillars."

The seeds, which were planted in advance of the frost this fall, will be pushed deep

into the soil by the snow and frost and begin to grow in the spring as temperatures rise.

"This isn't a massive undertaking," said Director Phil Porter. "But, it is an important one. We are the stewards of both historical and natural resources at the Straits of Mackinac. That means making sure there are always butterflies on the island for generations to come."

In addition to their own beauty, butterflies and the other insects who will make use of the milkweed habitat are also responsible for making sure the island is replete with wildflowers by pollinating the wide variety of plants that grow naturally along the Island's more than 70 miles of trails and roadways.

# New Publication Highlights History of Downtown Mackinac Island with Images

Mackinac State Historic Parks maintains the largest archive of historic photographs of Straits of Mackinac. Over the last half century we have published hundreds of images in our more than 100 books. Eugene Petersen's *Mackinac: Its History in Pictures* is the most comprehensive collection of images. Since its publication in 1973 we have gathered thousands more.

The purpose of this series is to make these images available to researchers and Mackinac enthusiasts. Most of the photographs have never been published by us before. A few previously published images are included, in order to provide context for adjacent images. The intention is not to provide a history of Mackinac, but simply to present images on a given theme with a few comments and reflections.

The focus of this volume is images of the "downtown" area of Mackinac

Island, from Windermere Point to Mission Point.

By the first two decades of the nineteenth century significant development had occurred here, particularly with the establishment of the Protestant Mission in 1822. Most of the development here was, and remains, residential, although the earliest resort hotels opened here prior to the Civil War. Many hotels and bed and breakfasts continue to operate here today.

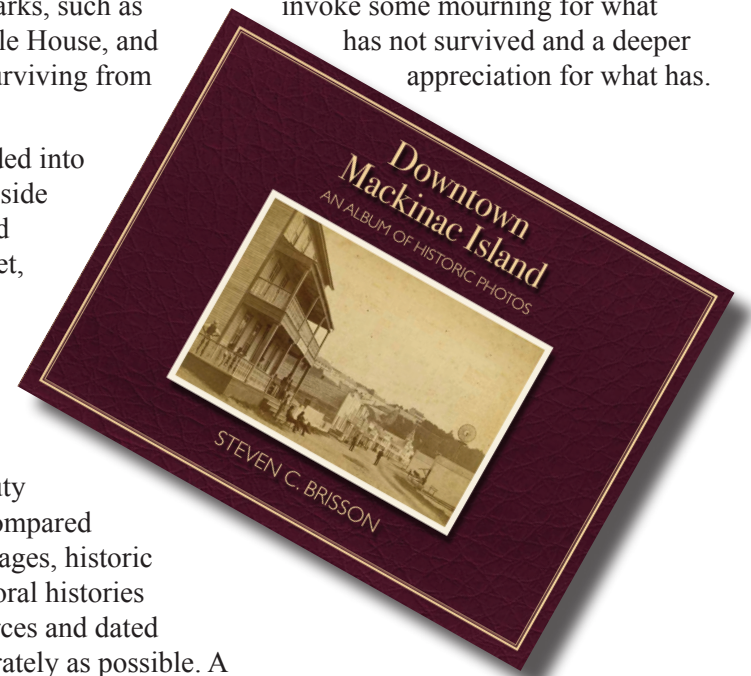
The photographs in this volume date from 1865 to 1990. The earliest capture a community that has just transitioned from a fur trade and fishing village into a summer resort. Most of the landmarks and vistas familiar to the residents at the height of the American fur trade in 1825 were still present in 1865. However, as the photographs demonstrate, the village changed greatly as it adapted to the growing tourist market. Over the next forty years, by 1905, the

downtown had changed significantly, and many locations and intersections would not be recognizable by the island's earlier inhabitants. It was this Mackinac that solidified into the one with which we are familiar with today: a Victorian village with small pockets and landmarks, such as Stuart House, Biddle House, and Mission Church, surviving from the fur-trade era.

The book is divided into images of the west side (further sub-divided between Main Street, Market Street and views from Fort Mackinac) and the east side.

Analysis of the photos by Deputy Director Brisson compared them with other images, historic maps, documents, oral histories and secondary sources and dated everything as accurately as possible. A

picture is worth a thousand words, and the sharp eyes and interests of others may focus on different details of these fascinating views of Mackinac. It is hoped that this compilation will encourage a further investigation into Mackinac's history as well as invoke some mourning for what has not survived and a deeper appreciation for what has.



## Photo Album: Astor House, ca. 1885

This rare winter scene on Mackinac Island shows the Astor House on Market Street. The hotel consisted of the original buildings of the American Fur Company. At the center is the Stuart House and beyond it the warehouse, today's community hall. Converted into a hotel in the 1850s, the two buildings were joined together by a double-decker porch. The structure at the right was originally the fur company's clerk's quarters. It was torn down in the late 1950s. This is one of over 100 historic downtown images featured in the new publication *Downtown Mackinac: An Album of Historic Photos*.

# Strategic Planning, Setting the Foundation for Many Years to Come

Warren Buffett once observed that, “Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.” Buffett’s insight speaks to the value of long range planning and reminds me of our stewardship responsibility to professionally preserve and manage our resources for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. During this past year, both Mackinac Associates and Mackinac State Historic Parks have undertaken strategic planning processes. These plans chart a path into the future so that tomorrow’s visitors will enjoy the “shade of mature trees” that we are planting today.

Last August the Mackinac Associates Board of Trustees and Mackinac State Historic Parks staff met to formulate a plan to guide the organization’s growth, development and operations. With Tom Bailey, Executive Director of the Little Traverse Conservancy acting as facilitator, the group identified four major categories of initiatives: organizational infrastructure, membership services and development, fund development

and revenue generation, and marketing and communications. Deliverable products include a new Board Manual to clarify board member responsibilities and committee structure, creation of a new Youth Advisory Committee, conducting web-based surveys to evaluate member programs, creation of new, electronic donor recognition displays, and development of a new website to facilitate communication and information sharing.

Mackinac State Historic Parks first embraced comprehensive institutional strategic planning in the late 1980s. Since that time, MSHP has produced multiple planning documents including the most recent plan, “The Territory Ahead, Mackinac State Historic Parks Strategic Plan, 2012-2017.” With the successful completion of many major projects, including the reconstruction of Fort Holmes and the South Southwest Rowhouse at Michilimackinac, installation of the Mackinac Island Peace Garden, construction and installation of the “Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum at Old Mackinac Point

Lighthouse,” and a multitude of major repair projects and exhibit installations, it is time to begin a new planning process.

The MSHP planning process has been streamlined as compared to earlier plans. This effort is focused on MSHP’s primary mission-directed activities which are public programming and resource stewardship. These issues are being addressed by three committees: Buildings and Facilities, Museum Programs, Marketing and Sales, and Environmental and Park Enhancements. The new plan proposes strategies for three years rather than five, recognizing how difficult it is to anticipate the variety of challenges and opportunities that face historic site museums in today’s rapidly changing world. The plan will be presented to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission for review and approval in May and the MSHP Fund Development Committee will meet in July to create a complementary funding strategy.

The Mackinac Associates and

Mackinac State Historic Parks plans will work hand-in-hand to guide our efforts to protect, preserve and present Mackinac’s rich historical and natural resources. We believe that bold and innovative programming and professional and thoughtful resource management, supported by a well-organized and forward thinking friends group and funded through a diverse and steady revenue stream is a perfect recipe for a successful future.



Phil Porter  
Director

## New Commanding Officer’s House Exhibit Highlights Updated Research, Visitor Interaction



Above: The current reconstruction of one of the rooms in the Commanding Officer’s House. The walls are plastered and updates have been made to the fireplace.

Below: The Commanding Officer’s House exhibit previously featured a billiards table as part of a period setting among its more rustic interior.

In the 300 years that shaped Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, the nation in charge changed hands from France, to Great Britain, Native Americans, and ultimately the United States. During the British occupation of the fort, the commanding officer lived in a residence near the water gate.

The well-appointed domicile was originally constructed in the 1750s. In 1770, carpenters were sent to Fort Michilimackinac to convert the building into an officers’ barracks capable of housing at least four officers. By the time Captain Arent DePeyster and his wife Rebecca arrived in 1774, however, most junior officers lived in rented houses around the fort. The DePeysters were probably the buildings only residents during their tenure at Michilimackinac, which lasted until 1779.

When Patrick Sinclair ordered the post moved to Mackinac Island in 1779, the commanding officer’s house was no exception. It was rebuilt below Fort Mackinac and housed British and American officers until it was demolished around 1820. Its ruins were among the first excavated at Fort Michilimackinac in 1959.

Though minor updates to the interior exhibit space of the commanding officer’s house have taken place since it was initially reconstructed, the building has remained largely unchanged since it first opened.

“We’re updating every inch of the space,” said Craig Wilson, museum historian. “There will be a traditional exhibit gallery, period settings, and a functional historic kitchen, making this a diverse, mixed application exhibit.”

“We want to use this exhibit to explore the lives and culture of British officers in Canada through the lens of Arent and Rebecca DePeyster,” Wilson added. “The DePeysters were somewhat unique in that Rebecca accompanied Arent to his posts in North America, but their experiences at Fort Michilimackinac were shared by British officers around the world.”

The entire interior of the structure has been changed. With new walls creating four rooms around a central hall, a chimney has been made fully-functional, and the exterior has been altered, turning two former doorways into windows. “The more accurate layout is based on a combination of archaeological and archival research,” said Wilson. “We’ve gone over a tremendous amount of correspondence between officers and the letters of Thomas Gage, the commanding general of North America, and looked at other structures built throughout Canada during the time period.”

The exhibit is fully funded by Mackinac Associates and is expected to be completed early in the summer of 2016.

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[mackinacassociates.com](http://mackinacassociates.com)



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