

CURIOSITIES

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2023 ISSUE 1

WHAT'S NEW?

As the calendar flips to the new year, the Mackinac State Historic Parks crew is busy preparing its historic sites and parks for an exciting 2023 season.

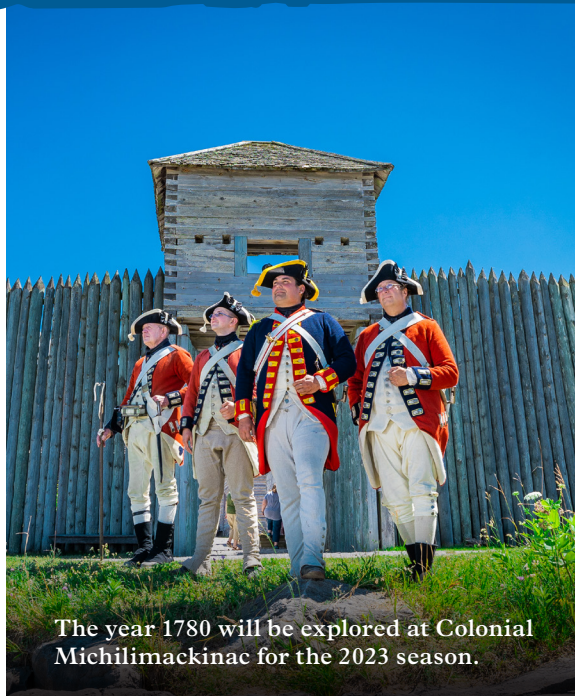
“We are excited to welcome visitors to experience our parks and numerous attractions,” said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director. “We have added a variety of new exhibits and programs over the last few years, and our staff is busy preparing to have everything ready for our spring openings.”

2023 marks the 125th anniversary of the automobile ban on Mackinac Island. Mackinac State Historic Parks will mark this occasion with a special event on July 22, complete with an 1886 Benz Motorwagen on the island. The “horseless vehicle” will also be on display outside Fort Mackinac during the day on July 22. A special commemorative logo has been developed and will be found on merchandise at Mackinac State Historic Parks museum stores, as well as on the license plates found on carriages throughout the island. A new vignette, written by former Mackinac State Historic Parks’ Director Phil Porter, will also be published for the anniversary. Mackinac Associates is a sponsor of the celebration.

“Mackinac Island is famous for many things, but the century and a quarter-old ban on motorized vehicles is truly at the top of why it is such a special place,” Brisson said.

The theater and museum store have swapped places at Fort Mackinac, which is part of a larger interpretive plan for the Soldier’s Barracks. New programs, including a deep dive on gear issued to soldiers in the 1880s, and classic programs, such as the iconic rifle and cannon firings, will take place throughout the summer.

Elsewhere on Mackinac Island, the McGulpin House, an excellent example of French-Canadian domestic architecture, will receive brand new exhibits for the 2023 season. A dendroarchaeological study of the house



The year 1780 will be explored at Colonial Michilimackinac for the 2023 season.



Classic Fort Mackinac programs, such as the iconic cannon firing, will get a fresh perspective for 2023.

conducted during the 2022 season verifies the house as being built in 1790, making it one of the oldest residential structures on the island.

At The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, a new juried art exhibition will debut on the second floor – “A Mackinac Day.” Mackinac Associates assists in providing the prize money for the winning artists. An art attendant, new for 2023, will guide guests through the museum and provide a better understanding of the art and artists who have created art inspired by the Straits of Mackinac.

The year 1780 will be explored at Colonial Michilimackinac, in Mackinaw City, where mischief and mayhem reigned. 1780 saw this isolated British outpost become a scene of paranoia, military mischief, and, from a certain point of view, mutiny. A special daily program will explore this spirit of dissent and disobedience that destabilized Michilimackinac’s garrison.

The Mackinac State Historic Parks’ archaeology program will enter its 65th season in 2023. Work will continue on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse at Colonial Michilimackinac.

Guests now have two opportunities to fire weapons at Colonial Michilimackinac: an opening cannon blast, at 9:30 a.m., or they can fire the full complement of weapons at Guns Across the Straits. Mackinac Associates members receive discounts on both programs.

The ongoing restoration of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse continues in 2023, as an oil house will be reconstructed on the property. Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park will debut a streamlined Forest Adventure Experience (formerly the Adventure Tour).

Every museum store will feature new items inspired by the site they represent. The Official Mackinac Island State Park Store, inside the Mackinac Island State Park Visitor’s Center, will continue to have new items inspired by the historic and natural elements of Mackinac Island. Mackinac Associates members receive a discount at all museum stores.

Mackinac Associates members receive complimentary admission to all Mackinac State Historic Parks included with membership, and most memberships include free admission to special events. Check elsewhere in this issue for opening dates and a list of events.



Bart Stupak, Maeve Croghan, Nancy May, and Laurie Stupak at the 2022 G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration held at the Michigan Governor’s Summer Residence.

2023 MEMBERS-ONLY EVENTS

Mark your calendars! Mackinac Associates, as usual, has a fun lineup of events on tap for the upcoming season.

The kick-off to summer is the G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration, scheduled for Saturday, June 24 at 6:00 p.m. The event will take place at the spectacular home of Dan Musser and Marlee Brown, near Hubbard’s Annex. This annual highlight of the social calendar will feature cocktails, hors d’oeuvres, entertainment and dinner.

The annual Red, White & Blue Celebration will take place at 5:00 p.m. at the Huron Road Rest Area and Pavilion next to Fort Mackinac on July 4. This patriotic celebration is free for members and a great way to start the holiday evening.

Finally, the 2022 annual meeting will be at Wawakashmo Golf Club on August 12 at 4:00 p.m. After the business meeting and election of officers and trustees, members can bust out the hickory sticks and play a little golf as it was played a century ago.

Don’t forget to check out Mackinac State Historic Parks events as well (mackinacparks.com/events), as most Mackinac Associates memberships include admission to these popular events.

PORTRAITS OF ARENT AND REBECCA DEPEYSTER PURCHASED

Mackinac State Historic Parks is pleased to announce the purchase of ca. 1790 portraits of Arent and Rebecca DePeyster from Bellmans Fine Art Auctioneers, a London-based auction house.

DePeyster served as commandant at Fort Michilimackinac from 1774 until 1779, and then at Detroit. The portraits had descended through the DePeyster family until at least the end of the twentieth century. Mackinac State Historic Parks' staff had been aware of the existence of these portraits in recent decades, as photographic copies had been shared with the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland.

"This is an exceptional addition to our collection," said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks director. "DePeyster was a prominent individual in the early history of this region, and it is gratifying to bring these treasures home to Michigan."

The purchase price for the portraits was \$47,000. Mackinac State Historic Parks was alerted to the auction by historian and author Brian Dunnigan, who was alerted to the auction through a colleague. They were purchased through the Martin and Patricia Jahn Collections Development Fund, and the Mackinac Associates fall appeal will help reimburse this fund.

The portraits are currently at a conservator and will be on display at The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum this summer.



The Benjamin Blacksmith Shop, located next door to the Biddle House, opens for the 2023 season May 12.

OPENING DAYS

May 4 – Fort Mackinac

May 10 – Colonial Michilimackinac

May 11 – Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse

May 12 – The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, Benjamin Blacksmith Shop, Biddle House, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum

June 3 – American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum, McGulpin House

PHOTO ALBUM: SAINTE MARIE SHIPS, LATE 1800s

In 1893, the railroad ferry *Sainte Marie* was completed and began operating in the Straits of Mackinac for the Mackinac Transportation Company. The ship was 288 feet long and could travel at 18.5 miles per hour fully loaded. She was constructed with an oak hull and reinforced with steel sheathing for protection against the ice. She proved to be an excellent ice crusher, capable of continuous operation in 27 inches of ice. The ship became a model for other ice breakers built by Russia, Finland, Latvia and other countries. The ship ran until 1911 when she was replaced by the 338 foot long *Chief Wawatam*.

The second *Sainte Marie* was built in 1913 and looked like the *Chief Wawatam* but was shorter at 250 feet. The ship was used as a backup when rail traffic was heavy or when the *Wawatam* was being repaired. The ship was very maneuverable in the ice and able to free other vessels that had become stuck. She was chartered by the Lake Carriers Association in the spring for several years to assist in keeping shipping traffic moving around the Great Lakes. By the early 1960s, rail traffic had diminished at the straits and ice breaking was done by the United States Coast Guard. The ship was sold and taken to Ashtabula, Ohio in 1962 to be scrapped.





DIRECTOR'S OUTLOOK

History is what we do. It's in our very name. Our preserved sites, exhibits, publications, and programs are the public face of this history. Historical research is the mostly behind-the-scenes aspect of our historical program. The most significant research we do is the ongoing historical archaeology excavation at Colonial Michilimackinac. The findings allow us to reconstruct the site and inform us about daily life presented through interpretive programs. Key artifacts from the dig are featured in exhibits and each excavation results in at least one publication, sharing the valuable data with archaeologists and historians.

Extensive traditional historical research is conducted for all our programs, with staff delving into archival documents, historic images, and oral histories. The work is ever expanding by the discovery of new resources and the application of new techniques. Examples of this are noted elsewhere in this issue: the acquisition of the DePeyster portraits and the dendroarchaeology study of McGulpin House. The former represents our ongoing efforts to acquire historical resources and the latter how new research furthers our knowledge about life at Mackinac.

The work of collecting and reassessment is not limited to our own work, and we are fortunate for the preservation efforts and historical research by other agencies and professional historians. Two recent examples illustrate how we benefit from this. The first was brought to light by Exhibit Designer Keeney Swearer, who regularly trolls the internet looking for newly digitized Mackinac images. Last month he discovered a cache of 38 original army plans of Fort Mackinac at the National Archives. The plans will prove valuable in future restoration efforts as well as providing information on how the army used these buildings. Over the decades we have culled the National Archives for data, but this record group was apparently not available before. The improved cataloging of the plans by the National Archives, and especially their being available digitally on the internet,

allowed us to learn of their existence.

The other recent example is a reassessment of the historical record. For generations one of the most important sources for the early British fur trade has been Alexander Henry's *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories*. It is best remembered for the dramatic account of the 1763 attack at Michilimackinac during Pontiac's Rebellion, an important source in our interpretation at Colonial Michilimackinac. Over the years, problems with Henry's narrative have been noted by scholars. Our own Keith Widder, due to its numerous discrepancies, notes that the work must "be read critically." However, the book is so embedded in our understanding of the events that historians have continued to argue that the core of the story must be accurate. In an article in the spring 2022 issue of *Michigan Historical Review*, historian Mark Osborne Humphries synthesizes these nagging questions, and calls into serious question much of what is contained in the book. Humphries posits that Henry had nothing to do with the



"HISTORY IS NEVER DONE. NEW SOURCES AND CONTINUAL ANALYSIS ARE CRITICAL."

— STEVE BRISSON, DIRECTOR

writing of the narrative. He presents a strong case that the book's true author, one Edward Augustus Kendall, likely stole a partial journal from Henry and then heavily edited and embellished the work, at times drawing from other disparate sources, including conversations with Henry. Humphrey concludes that the book "should be read as a partially fictionalized biography of Alexander Henry rather than a primary source on the early history of the

Northwestern fur trade." Fully acknowledging these problems means that we must move past them, and work to separate fact from fiction.

As these initiatives make clear, history is never done. New sources and continual analysis are critical. We endeavor to continue to expand our knowledge to ensure we are presenting the most accurate information through our exhibits, programs, and publications.



Our family has a long history on Mackinac Island as business owners and residents and understand the importance of preserving the historical structures and natural features of Mackinac Island. We can't think of a better way to help ensure the future preservation of this special place for our children and the community than with a planned gift to Mackinac Associates.

— Les Parrish and Ann Callewaert Parrish

LEGACY SOCIETY

2023 EVENT DATES

May 13
Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge, Fort Mackinac & Mackinac Island State Park

June 21
"A Mackinac Day" Open House, The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum

June 24
G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration, Home of Dan Musser and Marlee Brown, 6:00 p.m.

July 4
Red, White & Blue Celebration, Huron Road Pavilion, 5:00 p.m.

July 22
Automobile Ban Event, Fort Mackinac

July 29
Vintage Base Ball, Fort Mackinac

August 12
Mackinac Associates Annual Meeting, Wawakashmo Golf Club, 4:00 p.m.

October 6-7
Fort Fright, Colonial Michilimackinac

December 9
A Colonial Christmas, Colonial Michilimackinac

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