

CURIOSITIES

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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

Mackinac Associates provided \$250,000 for the reconstruction of Fort Holmes.

In many ways, it feels as if Mackinac Associates has always been around. Looking at the sheer number of exhibits, programs, and initiatives it has funded, it can certainly seem that Mackinac Associates was there when the Mackinac Island State Park Commission was created in 1895 or at least when the modern museum programs began in the late 1950s.

However, despite the expansive and impressive list of projects, Mackinac Associates is only turning 40 in 2022, a testament to the incredible growth of the group and the dedication to its mission of “friends preserving and sharing Mackinac’s heritage.”

The seeds for Mackinac Associates were planted in the late 1970s when a group of Mackinac Island cottagers discussed creating a private organization to help support state park programs. Initially, the Mackinac Island State Park Commission was a little leery that the organization was being formed as a rival policy-setting outfit but was reassured that this was not the case. In 1980 the commission gave its blessing, and in 1981 Mackinac Associates held its first event. It was in 1982 that the associates received its 501(c)(3) designation.

What started with a group of like-minded cottagers and friends of the park in the late 1970s has now blossomed into a friends group that boasts more than 2,000 members. Those 2,000-plus members are part of an organization that has assisted funding nearly every major project done by Mackinac State Historic Parks in the past 40 years through membership dues, annual fund raisers, and specific project campaigns.

“We are so grateful for what Mackinac Associates has done because there are many projects we simply wouldn’t have been able to complete without their help,” said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director.

Mackinac Associates biggest financial assistance to date was \$250,000 for the reconstruction of Fort Holmes. The reconstruction was the exclamation point on

the bicentennial of the War of 1812 in 2015 and continues to shine as an example of the work Mackinac Associates members and donors have done.

Other major projects include \$40,000 for the construction of the Forest Canopy Bridge at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, \$100,000 for the creation of the Mackinac Island Native American Museum at the Biddle House, and, just this year, \$40,000 for the redesign of the Dr. Beaumont Museum inside the American Fur Co. Store and \$45,000 for development of a plan for park enhancements to Michilimackinac State Park in Mackinaw City.

“It’s not just the financial support that we’re thankful for,” Brisson said. “Knowing there is this group of people that are so supportive of our mission, this group of people saying ‘we’re behind you, we appreciate what you do’ is hugely gratifying and a big part of what makes Mackinac Associates special.”

Perhaps the most lasting legacy of Mackinac Associates has been its Education Endowment Fund, which has provided ongoing support to the tune of more than \$900,000 to Mackinac State Historic Parks’ Education Outreach programs since the late 1980s. Interpretive staff have visited hundreds of thousands of students, classroom by classroom, helping to spread the history of the Straits of Mackinac throughout Michigan. Starting in 2020, this fund has also allowed for Mackinac State Historic Parks to provide a virtual option for outreach. Additionally, Mackinac Associates has provided grants to schools looking to visit MSHP sites as part of a school field trip since the early 2000s.

“Mackinac Associates was instrumental in getting the education outreach program off the ground, allowing us to present Mackinac’s rich history and natural resources to thousands of students across Michigan,” Brisson said.

One of the benefits of joining a friends group is making new friends, and the events thrown by Mackinac Associates have certainly allowed for that. The annual G. Mennen Williams

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2022 EVENTS

Mark your calendars for Mackinac Associates’ annual events.

The kick-off to the season, as usual, is the **G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration**, scheduled for **Saturday, June 18** at 6:00 p.m. Tentatively, the cocktail hour is scheduled to take place at the Michigan Governor’s Summer Residence, with dinner following on the lawn outside the Commanding Officer’s Home next door.

The annual **Red, White & Blue Celebration** will take place at 5:30 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 kick off the holiday evening.

Finally, the **2022 Annual Meeting** will be on Mackinac Island on **Saturday, August 20**. The location is still being determined, so watch mackinacassociates.com or check the e-newsletter for more information.

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.



The annual Red, White & Blue Celebration on July 4 is a great way for members to come together in a casual setting.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

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Mackinac Celebration has become a highlight of the social calendar on Mackinac Island, and has allowed members to tour some of the most beautiful cottages on the island. As a special treat, the 2022 cocktail hour is tentatively scheduled to take place on the porch of the Michigan Governor's Summer Residence. The annual Red, White and Blue event on July 4 has become a casual way for members to gather on the holiday, and the annual meeting, while fulfilling its duties of presenting the business of the organization to the membership, has allowed for fun and engaging programs, including

learning how to play cricket and a discussion from Eric Hemenway from the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians in recent years.

New opportunities spearheaded by Mackinac Associates include a "Legacy Society," created in 2019, which provides an opportunity for individuals to make a bequest to Mackinac Associates, and a sponsorship program, which allows businesses to provide support.

Mackinac Associates funds have also helped in other ways, like assisting with funding for marketing strategies, funding for staff members in various programs including archaeology, purchasing video equipment, funding new cannons at both forts, and many others.

Mackinac Associates has provided assistance in sponsoring a staff position to assist with the administration of its activities since its

inception. Diane Dombroski held that role from 1994-2018, and Michelle Walk has filled it since. The associates have also funded an assistant role since 2018.

Again, it's fairly incredible the amount Mackinac Associates has accomplished in 40 years. Every time someone visits Fort Holmes, or dares to look down from the Canopy Bridge at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, or learns the continuing story of the Anishnaabek people of Mackinac Island at the Biddle House, Mackinac Associates members can smile knowing that they had a direct hand in helping to protect, preserve, and present Mackinac's rich historic and natural resources. Here's to the next 40 years.



The Biddle House, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum and funded in large part by Mackinac Associates, opens for the 2022 season on May 3.

2022 MACKINAC STATE HISTORIC PARKS OPENING DATES

- May 3 | Fort Mackinac
- May 3 | Biddle House, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum
- May 3 | Benjamin Blacksmith Shop
- May 3 | The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum
- May 4 | Colonial Michilimackinac
- May 5 | Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse
- May 6 | Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park
- June 4 | American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum
- June 4 | McGulpin House

LEGACY SOCIETY

As summer residents of Mackinac Island, Lisa and I continue to be so impressed by the ways that the Mackinac State Historic Parks have made historic preservation come alive through programs and activities that weave the past into current focus for all to enjoy.

Mackinac Associates plays a vital role in working with the commission and staff in protecting and preserving our historical record of this region by funding these unique sites and its interpretation of how the past is intertwined

with our wishes to be a part of a community that appreciates the places around us.

That is why Lisa and I have committed to being planned giving supporters of Mackinac Associates and their commitment to engage, support, and encourage all of us to strengthen our community and emphasize the power of place in making history relevant to modern life. We encourage you to join us in this partnership role for future generations to learn and enjoy.



Pete Pellerito, Lisa Brock and Family



Thank you to our
Fort Mackinac Sponsor



The Pink Pony has sponsored the Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge since 2019.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Mackinac Associates offers a variety of sponsorship packages, providing opportunities for the business community to become more involved in what Mackinac Associates does in a more coordinated way, and protecting, preserving and presenting the rich historic and natural resources of the Straits of Mackinac.

Any questions, or other potential giving or sponsorship options, can be forwarded to

Michelle Walk, Membership and Development Coordinator, at walkm1@michigan.gov or (231) 436-4100 or by visiting mackinacassociates.com/sponsorship.htm.

Deadline to be guaranteed to be included on all items listed in the sponsorship package for a given level is March 15.



DIRECTOR'S OUTLOOK

In researching the history of Mackinac we primarily rely on traditional historical data. We develop narratives based on official records, reports, and newspaper accounts. Sometimes there are personal letters or diaries offering rare glimpses into individual experiences and feelings. Contrary to what many people think, such detailed firsthand accounts are a rarity. Every historian has likely wished to have just an hour with a person from the past to ask them questions. We probably all have found ourselves regretting not having asked a departed relative about their life.

We are fortunate that fifty years ago a concerted effort was made to ask those questions of residents of Mackinac Island before it was too late. This was through the establishment of a systematic "oral history" program. While it has waxed and waned over the years, the efforts of numerous interviewers have provided us a collection of memories that otherwise would have been lost.

The program began as a research project by the commission, originally in collaboration with the Mackinac Island Historical Society. Tom Pfeiffelmann played a key role, conducting many of the early interviews. Completing the recorded interview is only the first step, and from the beginning it was acknowledged that getting the information transcribed, edited, and indexed was essential to both preserve and disseminate the information. The final manuscripts were bound, illustrated with photographs, and made available to researchers at our library. Copies provided to the historical society were deposited at the Mackinac Island Public Library.

Over the decades we continued the program, with Keith Widder, Phil Porter, and others completing periodic oral histories. A notable project in 1999 involved students from the Mackinac Island Public School interviewing area residents about their memories of attending the Thomas W. Ferry School.

In 2016, under the auspices of the Mackinac

Island Community Foundation, a new committee was formed to spearhead a drive to complete new interviews. I served as park representative and chaired the committee. We developed a list of interviewees and then sought interviewers. I'm pleased to report this dedicated group of volunteers completed numerous oral histories over the next three years. We are grateful to Toby Murray, Vicki Riel, Christi Dupre, Marta Olson, Todd Petersen, Bob Tagatz, and Phil Porter for serving as interviewers.

Recording the interview, as noted, is only the first step. We already had a backlog of recordings awaiting transcription, some dating to the early 2000s. Beginning last winter, we have launched a concerted effort to finalize both these and the recent interviews. Phil Porter took the lead on several, aided by Kathy



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– STEVE BRISSON, DIRECTOR

Cryderman of our staff. This winter we brought on Mara Goetz-Froeschke, who has worked as an assistant for Mackinac Associates and receptionist at Fort Mackinac, to transcribe all the remaining oral histories.

The oral history program is just one example of the research and preservation efforts of Mackinac State Historic Parks. It provides us with a valuable and unique source of historical

information. We are pleased that we have been able to both continue and strengthen it. Several oral histories have recently been completed and others are scheduled. Interestingly, Phil Porter will sit down to interview Tom Pfeiffelmann this March. Our first interviewer is now the interviewee.



PHOTO ALBUM: 1887 STEREO VIEW

This 1887 stereo view showing the interior of the Fort Mackinac Soldiers' Barracks was recently purchased for the collection. The first floor barracks room where soldiers lived is today occupied by the Sutler's Store. The image was taken by the Foley Brothers who opened a studio on Mackinac Island in the 1880s. This view was part of a series showing scenes on Mackinac Island including buildings, geological formations, streets and other locations. Stereo views like this could be purchased as souvenirs and enjoyed at home viewed through a stereopticon.

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MackinacAssociates.com



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2022 MSHP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May

14 | Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge, Mackinac Island

June

16 | "Mackinac Journeys" Open House, The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum

18 | G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration, Michigan Governor's Summer Residence, 6:00 p.m. Tentative - location may change

July

4 | Red, White & Blue Celebration, Huron Road Pavilion, 5:30 p.m.

23 | Vintage Base Ball, Fort Mackinac, 6:30 p.m.

August

20 | Mackinac Associates Annual Meeting, Mackinac Island

October

7-8 | Fort Fright, Colonial Michilimackinac, 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

December

10 | A Colonial Christmas, Colonial Michilimackinac, 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Visit MackinacAssociates.com for updates.