

Meet Keeney Swearer, MSHP Exhibit Designer

On a given day during the operating season, Mackinac State Historic Parks Exhibit Designer Keeney Swearer may start his day at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, on top of the Treetop Discovery Tower repairing the audio bird song exhibit. Later, he's on Mackinac Island, making his way to The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum to assist with installing a painting. Finally, he's back in Mackinaw City at his shop, drafting a new exhibit plan to present to the creative team. It's hectic, but it's just the way he likes it.

Looking back at all of the major exhibit and design projects done since 2014, there are two constants: Mackinac Associates funding, and Keeney Swearer.

The list of projects is impressive: the science and technology exhibit at Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, and Colonial Michilimackinac projects in 2018; the redesigned guardhouse at Fort Mackinac, British Landing Nature Center, and Sounds of the Forest at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park in 2017; the Native American Cultural History Trail, and Commanding Officer's House at Colonial Michilimackinac in 2016; the exhibit inside Fort Holmes in 2015; and the list goes on and on. Keeney was a driving creative force behind all of those projects. And there's no break on the horizon.



Left to Right: Keeney Swearer. Keeney hard at work on one of many projects.

Keeney is hard at work on the final stages of 2018 projects (see related article), already in the preliminary stages of 2019 initiatives such as the Mackinac Island Botanical Trail and Biddle House redesign, and has his eye on future projects at Fort Mackinac and Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park.

Keeney joined the permanent staff of Mackinac State Historic Parks in April 2014, after graduating with a Fine Arts degree from Kalamazoo College. He previously served as the MSHP exhibits intern during the 2012 season. It was during that internship when he realized

being an exhibit designer could be in his future.

"It was really my first foray into the exhibit designing world," he said. "I had always been around it between art exhibits and non-profits, but that was my eye-opening moment into how my skills could be used in exhibit designing."

Since joining the staff it's been a whirlwind of projects – large ones such as the Native American Cultural History Trail, Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum and Fort Holmes, to smaller projects such as Fort Fright exhibits and filming the new Colonial Michilimackinac orientation video.

Some projects stick out more than others – such as the Sounds of the Forest exhibit out on a nature trail at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park. It ranks as Keeney's favorite project... and his most difficult.

"It covered the full breadth of my skills – from graphic design, to multiple interactives, AV, sculpting – it really utilized my full skill set," he explained. "It was also my most challenging. It used a diverse range of materials to achieve a lot of things. It had so many things involved in it, and making all of them mesh was an interesting challenge."

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Michilimackinac, Lighthouse to Debut New Exhibits

Guests to Colonial Michilimackinac and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse will be greeted with new and exciting changes for the 2018 season.

Colonial Michilimackinac

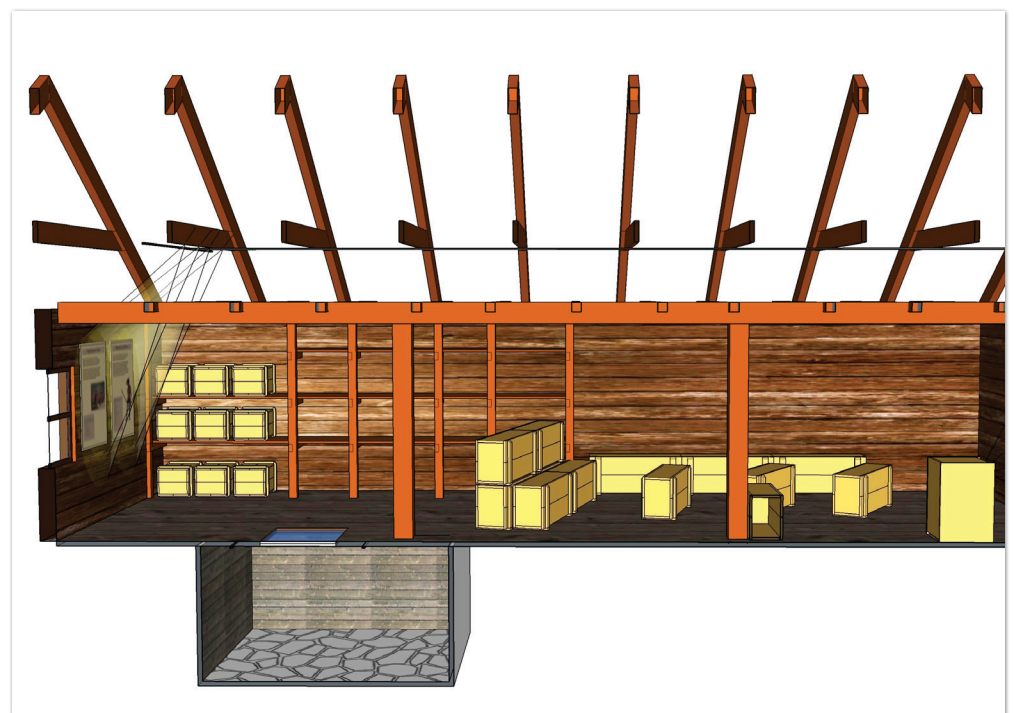
A brand new orientation movie, titled *Michilimackinac: Crossroads of the Great Lakes*, will debut inside the retrofitted King's Storehouse inside Colonial Michilimackinac. The previous film was 17 years old and located inside the Visitor's Center. It replaced a slide show dating to the late 1980s.

According to museum historian Craig Wilson, the King's Storehouse was one of the oldest exhibits in

the Mackinac State Historic Parks museum system. It was completely gutted during the winter, and new exhibit panels and a small theater were added. The new look will keep the historic features of the building intact and will allow visitors to still look into the original cellar. Seating for the theater will resemble crates and boxes, keeping with the theme of a storehouse. The movie will play on a 20 minute loop during the day.

"We want it to provide an introduction and overview into the site," Wilson said. "We hope it brings some context to the exhibits and demonstrations and live interpretation they'll see inside."

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King's Storehouse Render

Meet Keeney Swearer, MSHP Exhibit Designer (continued)

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The uniqueness of the location of the Sounds of the Forest also came with a set of difficulties. “We had to create a new road to get equipment to prep the site, which had to happen more than a year out. We had to figure out how to install it without ruining the ambience of the site. But it was, ‘let’s find a way.’”

One of the big motivations for Keeney is to keep his exhibits on the cutting edge. Currently his challenge is getting all of the digital elements he wants to incorporate to mesh with the physical exhibits seamlessly. Doing these projects in house maintains design continuity, and Mackinac Associates funding allows him to do them in a timely manner.

“Mackinac Associates is able to fundraise in such an efficient manner, with such a strong membership base, that we can do the work since we’re not sitting around waiting.”

Mackinac Associates’ support shows up in several facets of Keeney’s exhibit work. It can range from tweaking an existing exhibit with the purchase of a new touch screen or new interactive element, to making a correction to an exhibit due to new research, to the full funding of mid-range exhibits such as the Fort Mackinac Guardhouse and Sounds of the Forest.

“Mackinac Associates allows us to do these projects much quicker, which is very important in a small exhibit department,” he said. “We can play with more cutting-edge interactives. We can buy new equipment. Speed is important to give visitors the best experience possible, and let us be more adaptable than larger museums.”

After a new exhibit is proposed, Keeney is part of a planning team that includes curatorial staff and park operations. The team will conduct research, look at the various constraints of the space, toss out ideas and get a

rough idea of the proposed exhibit. Keeney will then create a rendering of the space for vetting, and, after another round of reviews, a rendering that will go out for potential fundraising.

“We like to get that initial rendering out there because it’s easier to market, easier to explain to people what they’re going to see,” Keeney explained. “People like to see behind the scenes.”

From that initial rendering, and after the funds have been secured, the work starts. Changes will happen along the way, but a good portion of the initial plan will show up in the finished product. For instance, about 75% of the finished Native American Cultural History Trail showed up in those initial renderings. For the King’s Storehouse project that will debut this spring, the only change was from a projector to a TV screen.

Keeney enjoys the process of conceptualizing these large projects, and the work that goes into getting them from a screen into reality. But he truly relishes the fact that Mackinac Associates support allows him to continually be working.

“If we didn’t have this group that trusts us to do quality work, I’d spend a lot more time conceptualizing these small projects that takes away from my time to actually do them,” he said. “It allows me to actually do the project versus just talking about doing the project.”

Keeney’s dream exhibit is to cut a car in half for display, but realizes that is not something likely to happen with Mackinac State Historic Parks. In a more practical dream (as far as MSHP is concerned), he has big ideas for the various Visitor’s Centers spread across the parks, and looks forward to adapting new technology to older exhibits.

To see examples of Keeney’s work head to any Mackinac State Historic Parks’ site beginning May 2.

Photo Album: 1956

Cars have been banned on Mackinac since 1898, so how did this 1956 Buick Super Riviera end up downtown? It was one of several Buick models brought to the island as part of a publicity campaign. The cars were driven to Grand Hotel for a photo shoot. Special permission was granted to bring the vehicles to the island. This view comes from an original press photo released through a newspaper wire service.



MSHP Unveils New Logos

Fort Mackinac and Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse will both debut new logos for the 2018 season.

Fort Mackinac had used the same logo since 1988, while Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse had used its logo since 2005. The logos were similar in nature, and did not allow much flexibility in their use.

The new logos bring a fresh feel to the sites while allowing maximum flexibility in their use. Full Circle Marketing and Design, out of Grand Rapids, designed the logo (they also designed the new Colonial Michilimackinac logo last year), while Deputy Director Steve Brisson and Marketing Manager Dominick Miller oversaw the project for MSHP.

“Working with the design team at Full Circle was a rewarding experience,” Brisson said. “It’s always interesting to lay down ideas for a project and see the creative process at work.”

The Fort Mackinac logo incorporates the iconic West Blockhouse, a “symbolic icon used for generations to represent Mackinac Island and its history,” said Brisson. “We felt that given that tradition it was fitting to include it in the logo.”

The logo has four different stylized uses with the font, and the blockhouse icon can be used on its own, similar to the

Colonial Michilimackinac logo. The distinctive Victorian-looking font was also specifically chosen to further emphasize the era interpreted at Fort Mackinac.

The new logo is already displayed on the MSHP website, various ads, and will be integrated into signs on Mackinac Island.

The Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse logo is a more radical departure from the look of the previous logo. The logo has a more modern font with a stylized image of the front of the lighthouse, as seen from the water.

“It’s a nice, clean look that emphasizes the red roof, which was the prime day marker for the lighthouse,” explained Brisson. “It was a part of the aid to navigation, and a prominent feature of the building, and we’re excited to feature it in the new logo.”

Like the Fort Mackinac logo, the lighthouse logo can be broken down into smaller components. Even the image of the lighthouse can be pared down to only the tower.

The lighthouse will be receiving new signs around the grounds with the updated logo, including the main entrance sign off North Huron Avenue. The logo is also on the MSHP website and in ads and promotional signs.

This project was funded by Mackinac Associates.



Elements of the “Sounds of the Forest” Exhibit.



Keeney brushing gold on candlesticks for an exhibit inside Colonial Michilimackinac



Primary Fort Mackinac logo



Old Mackinac Point main logo

Sixty years ago this June, Mackinac State Historic Parks launched its modern museum program. With funds made available through the sale of revenue bonds, Dr. Eugene Petersen oversaw the installation of the site's first exhibit in the 1859 Soldiers' Barracks. The exhibit provided a chronological overview of Mackinac history in simple displays featuring labels, graphics, and a few historic objects. It was the only exhibit in the fort. Now, six decades later, we manage multiple historic sites with hundreds of exhibits and displays. Not only have we expanded our interpretation of the Straits of Mackinac but, hopefully, using new technologies and tools, we are doing a better job in engaging and educating our visitors.

Technological innovations since

1958 have allowed us to create more engaging interpretive displays. This began with the advent of audio visual programs starting with the 1960's sound and light program in Ste. Anne's Church at Colonial Michilimackinac. We eventually developed audio visual orientation programs at all of our sites, initially using nine-projector slide systems and now taking advantage of the latest video technology. Today, using our own staff, production equipment and software, we are revising the Colonial Michilimackinac program and moving it to the King's Storehouse where it will be more accessible to visitors.

Over the years we have added dozens of displays utilizing new technology and featuring interactive components. One of the challenges

is to avoid letting the "method" overwhelm the "message." We are, after all, a museum and not an arcade, and it does no good to create a "wow" experience that fails to effectively communicate. Another challenge is to make sure that modern display techniques don't diminish the historic environment of our sites. I believe that we can avoid this pitfall if we have careful planning and thoughtful installations.

For the past 35 years Mackinac Associates has been an invaluable partner in improving the interpretation of our historic sites. Nearly every major exhibit installation (and many smaller ones as well) have been made possible by the generous support of our members. We look forward to working closely with you



Phil Porter
Director

as we continue to create exciting, interactive, and engaging exhibits to help our visitors understand and appreciate Mackinac's rich history.

Michilimackinac, Lighthouse to Debut New Exhibits (continued)

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The movie *Attack! at Michilimackinac* will also receive a new home for the 2018 season. Previously shown in the South-Southwest Rowhouse, it will now be located in the Trader's House in the Southwest Rowhouse, directly across from the church. The room was retrofitted to show the movie, and also will contain exhibit panels detailing the famous 1763 uprising at the fort. A few small edits were made to the movie, to accommodate the new venue, and it will play on a 20 minute loop.

The vacated theater of the South-Southwest Rowhouse will feature a new museum store. "The Hearthside"

will feature unique collectibles, apparel and publications. It will also have a small space for guests to relax during their visit to the site, with hot and cold refreshments available.

"We've been thinking about adding a satellite museum store at Colonial Michilimackinac for a number of years," said Deputy Director Steve Brisson.

"We hope guests find it a nice place to relax and explore unique mementos to take home," added Sales Manager Suzette Schmalzried.

Additionally, new signs will be in place incorporating the updated Colonial Michilimackinac logo. All of the projects will be completed by opening day, May 2.

Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse

Two gallery areas of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse have been renovated, with exhibits focusing on the science of lighthouses, featuring elements demonstrating how technology harnessed the natural powers of light and sound to help keep sailors safe in the Straits of Mackinac. Hands-on elements allow visitors see how prisms bend and reflect light to create a brilliant lighthouse beacon, hear the power of low-frequency sounds to penetrate thick fogbanks, and even build their own visually unique lighthouse. The centerpiece of this new exhibit is a functional, rotating 4th order Fresnel lens, allowing visitors to see how these gleaming beehives of brass and glass worked at places like Old Mackinac Point.

Meanwhile, the original lens from Old Mackinac Point, on loan from the U.S. Coast Guard, will be prominently displayed in a new

case allowing visitors to see even more of this fascinating piece of historic technology.

"Since we interpret the history of the lighthouse well, we want people to understand the fundamental science behind lighthouses," Wilson said. "How does it actually work? They are pretty simple and universal concepts, and we hope to show how they were harnessed to help sailors on the Straits of Mackinac."

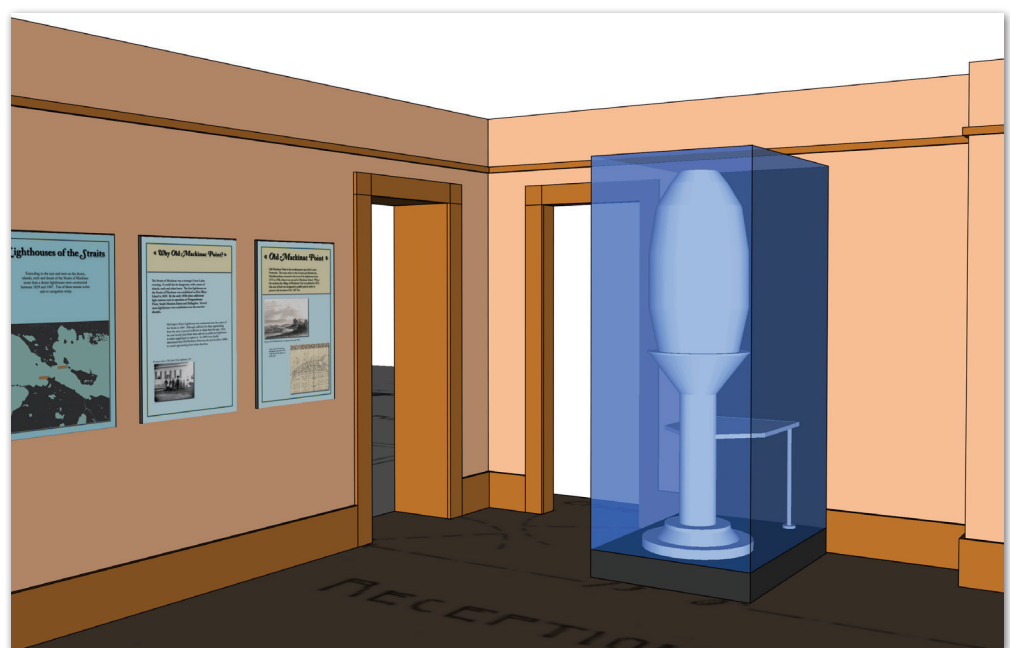
Additionally, throughout the season, a crew from National Restoration will be at the lighthouse replacing spalling bricks and failing mortar. Roughly 3,500 bricks will be replaced, with work beginning in March.

Like Colonial Michilimackinac, the lighthouse will also be receiving new and updated signs that feature the new logo.

Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse opens for the 2018 season on May 4.



Attack! at Michilimackinac Theater Render



Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse Reception Room Render

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2018 MSHP Calendar of Events

MAY

2 - Colonial Michilimackinac open for season
3 - Fort Mackinac open for season
3 - The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum open for season
4 - Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park open for season
4 - Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse open for season
18 - Mackinac Island State Park Commission Meeting, Mackinaw City
25 - Mackinac Associates Board Meeting, Mackinaw City
28 - Memorial Day Observance, Fort Mackinac Post Cemetery

JUNE

4 - King's Birth-day Celebration, Colonial Michilimackinac
6 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island

9 - Historic Downtown Mackinac open for season
9 - Soldiers of the King: The British Garrison of Michilimackinac, Colonial Michilimackinac
10 - Soldiers of the King: The British Garrison of Michilimackinac, Colonial Michilimackinac
13 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
13 - Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park
16 - Fort Mackinac Lilac Festival Events, Fort Mackinac
17 - Lilac Festival Grand Parade, Mackinac Island
20 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
20 - "Landscapes of Mackinac" Art Exhibition Open House, Mackinac Art Museum
23 - G. Mennen Williams Mackinac

Celebration, Mackinac Island
23 - Rendezvous at the Straits: Voyageur Culture, Colonial Michilimackinac
24 - Rendezvous at the Straits: Voyageur Culture, Colonial Michilimackinac
27 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island

JULY

4 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
4 - A Star Spangled Fourth of July, Fort Mackinac
4 - Mackinac Associates Red, White & Blue Celebration, behind Fort Mackinac
4 - An American Picnic, Fort Mackinac
11 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
14 - Ghostly Mackinac, Fort Mackinac
18 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island

21 - Vintage Base Ball, Fort Mackinac Ballfield
21 - Diverse Entertainment: Historic Pastimes and Games, Colonial Michilimackinac
22 - Diverse Entertainment: Historic Pastimes and Games, Colonial Michilimackinac
25 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
27 - Mackinac Island State Park Commission Meeting, Mackinac Island

AUGUST

TBD - Biddle Wedding and Reception, Biddle House, Mackinac Island
1 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
1 - Ghostly Mackinac, Fort Mackinac
4 - Griffing Art Show, Colonial Michilimackinac
4 - War of 1812 Weekend, Fort Mackinac

5 - Griffing Art Show, Colonial Michilimackinac
5 - War of 1812 Weekend, Fort Mackinac
8 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
11 - Gardens and Good Things to Eat, Colonial Michilimackinac
12 - Gardens and Good Things to Eat, Colonial Michilimackinac
15 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
22 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island
25 - Historic Downtown Mackinac Last Day, Mackinac Island
29 - Michigan Governor's Summer Residence Tours, Mackinac Island

SEPTEMBER

3 - Fall Hours of Operation, All Sites
8 - 8-Mile Road Race, Mackinac Island
8 - Michilimackinac at Work: Labor

and Trades, Colonial Michilimackinac
9 - Michilimackinac at Work: Labor and Trades, Colonial Michilimackinac
15 - Fire at Night, Fort Mackinac
22 - The Coronation of Their Majesties Celebration, Colonial Michilimackinac
22 - Fire at Night, Fort Mackinac
28 - Mackinac Island State Park Commission Meeting, Mackinac Island
29 - Fire at Night, Fort Mackinac

OCTOBER

5 - Fort Fright, Colonial Michilimackinac
6 - Fort Fright, Colonial Michilimackinac
7 - Mackinac Art Museum, Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse and Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park close for season
27 - Great Turtle Half Marathon, Mackinac Island
28 - Fort Mackinac Closed

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