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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2020

Mackinac State Historic Parks Celebrates 125 Years

MACKINAC ISLAND — Mackinac State Historic Parks turns 125 years old in 2020.

Established in 1895 when the federal government shuttered the country's second national park, Mackinac National Park, the Mackinac Island State Park Commission has pursued the important mission of protecting, preserving and presenting Mackinac's natural and historic wonders. Today, Mackinac State Historic Parks is a family of living history museums and nature parks located in Mackinaw City and on Mackinac Island.

To celebrate this milestone anniversary, Mackinac State Historic Parks will have 125 days of events throughout the 2020 season, spread across its family of sites and parks. Some highlights include Movies by the Bridge in Mackinaw City every Saturday and Movies in Fort Mackinac every Tuesday during the summer, unforgettable evening cannon firing events at Colonial Michilimackinac and Fort Mackinac, numerous events sponsored by the Mackinaw City Area Arts Council themed to the anniversary, special themed weekends at all of our historic sites, intriguing "Hidden History" evenings at Colonial Michilimackinac, guided and narrated treks to some of Mackinac Island's most beautiful natural and historic sites, and a special gala day, July 25, with free music and fireworks to mark the actual anniversary.

“Mackinac has such a special place in the history of our state and the hearts of Michiganders,” said Phil Porter, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director. “We look forward to sharing this 125th anniversary celebration with our visitors this summer through an exciting and engaging slate of activities and events.”

New exhibits will also debut as part of the celebration. On Mackinac Island, the Biddle House, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum, will open May 5. Here, you will be able to step into the home of Agatha and Edward Biddle, merchants who moved in around 1830. For Agatha, and other Anishnaabek and indigenous people, the 1830s were a time of critical change. This new exhibit, created in conjunction with tribal partners, explores that story and how it still resonates on Mackinac Island and throughout northern Michigan.

At Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, in Mackinaw City, the public will be able to explore the second floor of the lighthouse for the first time in the storied station’s existence. A new gallery space and two bedrooms restored to their appearance in 1910 will tell the story of the Keeper George Marshall, his wife Maggie, and their extended family as they lived and worked at the lighthouse.

The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum on Mackinac Island will host “A Day in the Park – Celebrating 125 Years of Mackinac Island State Park” in the second-floor gallery. This juried exhibition will be on display May 4 – October 11.

An update to 100 Years at Mackinac, published in 1995, will include everything that has happened in the past 25 years, including the reopening of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, the opening of The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, the construction of the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum, the addition of the Adventure Tour at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, the reconstruction of Fort Holmes, the addition of the Peace Garden, and the reinterpretation of the Biddle House.

Bière de Mac Brew Works in Mackinaw City will brew a special beer in honor of the celebration, a farmhouse ale that connects to Michilimackinac with its French roots. An official release of the beer

will happen in June. Ryba's Fudge Shops, with numerous locations on Mackinac Island, will create a special fudge to celebrate. This should prove to be one of the more delicious aspects of the anniversary.

Most of the events taking place throughout the 2020 season will be free. Others will be included with regular admission to MSHP's historic sites. Mackinac State Historic Parks wouldn't be where it is today without the tremendous support of visitors to its state parks and historic sites. Offering a full season of events is a small way the park can say thank you for 125 wonderful years.

The Mackinac Parks: 125 Celebration is sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the Richard and Jane Manoogian Foundation, with additional support from Mackinac Associates.

The Mackinac Island State Park Commission was created when the federal government shuttered Mackinac National Park in 1895. It held its first meeting in July of that year. Today the commission does business as Mackinac State Historic Parks and is chaired by Daniel J. Loepp. Porter has served as director since 2003. The commission manages Fort Mackinac, The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, Biddle House, Historic Downtown Mackinac and Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island, and Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park and Michilimackinac State Park in Mackinaw City.

A full schedule of events can be found at mackinacparks.com/mackinac125. Pictures, as well as the Mackinac Parks: 125 logo, are available upon request. For more information please visit mackinacparks.com or call (231) 436-4100.

Mackinac State Historic Parks, a family of living history museums and parks in northern Michigan's Straits of Mackinac, is an agency within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Its sites—which are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums—include Fort Mackinac, the Biddle House, The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, Historic Downtown Mackinac, and Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island, and Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park and Michilimackinac State Park in Mackinaw City. Mackinac State Historic Parks is governed by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, established in 1895 to protect, preserve and present the parks' rich historic and natural resources for the education and recreation of future generations. Visitor information is available at (231) 436-4100 or on the web at www.mackinacparks.com.

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