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What's New at Mackinac State Historic Parks?

MACKINAW CITY, MICH. — As the 2022 season approaches, Mackinac State Historic Parks staff are busy readying new tours, exhibits, publications, and more.

2022 marks an important anniversary on Mackinac Island: 200 years since the accident that led to Dr. William Beaumont's famous experiments. It was in 1822 that a young man named Alexis St. Martin was shot. Dr. Beaumont, the post surgeon at Fort Mackinac, saved his life. This terrible accident set Beaumont and St. Martin on a course of experimentation and discovery that remains crucial to medical science today. At the cost of St. Martin's permanent injury, Beaumont unlocked the secrets of human digestion. To celebrate this anniversary, the Dr. Beaumont Museum inside the American Fur Co. Store has been completely remodeled, with a new exhibit detailing Beaumont's experiments and the scientific process.

"We are excited to update this exhibit as part of our bicentennial celebration of this important event in medical history," said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director.

As part of the bicentennial, the American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum will receive an updated logo, and a special event will be held to thank those who helped support the new exhibit, especially Mackinac Associates. The American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum will open for the 2022 season on June 4.

Up at Fort Mackinac, the Schoolhouse will be completely remodeled and reimagined into the Reading Room, as it would have been known in the 1880s. This immersive space will allow you to

explore popular titles of the 1880s, read the latest (1880s) newspaper or periodical, and get a better understanding of what it was like to be a soldier in the 1880s and why the U.S. Army felt it was a good idea to have reading rooms within its forts. The Reading Room is scheduled to open with the rest of Fort Mackinac, May 3. This exhibit has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy demands wisdom.

“This exhibit will introduce our visitors to the immigrant experience in the U.S. Army of the late 19th century, army reforms, and education at Fort Mackinac,” Brisson said.

Additionally at Fort Mackinac, daily programs and tours will highlight the changing face of Fort Mackinac, the role women played at the fort, Mackinac’s time as a national park, and a look at who exactly made up the army of the 1880s. The popular drill and rifle firing program, which has been removed from the schedule due to Covid concerns the past two years, will return, and guests can expect rifle and cannon firing demonstrations throughout the day. The Tea Room at Fort Mackinac, operated by Grand Hotel, will feature new menu items for the 2022 season, and, as always, will feature one of the most stunning views in Michigan. One way to make a visit to Fort Mackinac the most memorable is to fire the opening cannon salute.

Elsewhere on Mackinac Island, the McGulpin House, which has been shuttered the past two seasons due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will reopen for the 2022 season from June 4-August 21. The McGulpin House is one of the oldest residential structures on the island, and an excellent and rare example of early French Canadian domestic architecture. Admission is included with a Fort Mackinac or Historic Downtown Mackinac ticket.

At The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, located in front of Fort Mackinac in Marquette Park, a new juried art exhibition will debut on the second floor – “Mackinac Journeys.” Every Mackinac journey is unique. From lifelong residents to the novice first-timer, the journey to, around, and from Mackinac is always memorable. The gallery will be on display from May 3 – October 9. Additionally, seven artists-in-residence will stay on Mackinac Island throughout the summer. Each artist

will host a special, free workshop on the second Wednesday of their residency. Finally, the Kids' Art Studio at The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum is scheduled to return for 2022.

Special events at Fort Mackinac and Mackinac Island include the Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge May 14, the annual Vintage Base Ball game July 23, special activities for July 4, special history evening programs including a guided tour of Historic Downtown Mackinac, a "Then and Now" program at Fort Mackinac, an evening exploring Fort Mackinac archaeological history, special nature and birdwatching tours, and meteor and full moon evenings at Fort Holmes. More information can be found at mackinacparks.com/events.

Every year at Colonial Michilimackinac, in Mackinaw City, we take a deeper look into a year of the American Revolution. For 2022 we're looking at 1779, as war headed west. Special tours and programs will take place throughout the summer highlighting the year.

One guest, every day, has the opportunity to fire all four black powder weapon Colonial Michilimackinac: the Short Land Musket, Wall Gun (a BIG musket), Coehorn Mortar, and, as the finale, the cannon. This program is available every evening after the fort closes for regular business May 4 - October 6.

Mackinac State Historic Parks' archaeology program at Colonial Michilimackinac will enter its 64th season in 2022. Work will continue in House E of the Southeast Rowhouse at Colonial Michilimackinac. Archaeologists will be out daily (weather permitting) during the summer months. Guests will also have the opportunity to see the most recent finds at Colonial Michilimackinac with a new "Recent Excavations" display inside the Colonial Michilimackinac Visitor's Center.

Special events at Colonial Michilimackinac include exhilarating "Fire at Night" programs, deep dives into Michilimackinac's maritime history, a look at the unreconstructed buildings of Michilimackinac, a celebration of the King's Birth-day on June 4, Movies by the Bridge, the ever-popular Fort Fright, and A Colonial Christmas. More information at mackinacparks.com.

The ongoing restoration of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse continues in 2022, as an oil house will be reconstructed on the property. The last few years have seen several gallery openings at the

lighthouse – the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum, the Science and Technology Exhibit, and the Marshall Gallery on the extensively renovated second floor. Throughout the day guides will sound the Fog Signal Whistle and provide tours of the lighthouse tower.

Over at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, the Adventure Tour will return to full operation for the 2022 season, including the climbing wall. Demonstrations of the sawpit and sawmill will take place throughout the day, in addition to a new “Farming at Mill Creek” program, which will explore 19th century farming at the site. Sowing, flailing, and grinding grain, cutting firewood, growing gardens, and tending livestock are just some of the activities that took place there from 1790-1840. Guests are encouraged to roll up their sleeves and take part in life beyond the sawmill at Mill Creek.

New nature programs will also be added to the daily schedule, allowing guests to meet a naturalist at the picnic area for a 30-minute program that will feature something for all ages. Topics will vary and may include a guided nature walk, stories, and fun activities focused on plants and animals living at Historic Mill Creek.

Three new publications will debut in 2022. *The Fort Mackinac Base Ball Club*, a vignette by former Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Phil Porter, will explore the history of the Fort Mackinac *Never Sweats* “base ball” club from 1871-1894. Another vignette, *A Spirit of Dissention and Disobedience in the Troops: Military Mischief at Michilimackinac, 1780-81*, by Chief Curator Craig Wilson, describes the summer of 1780 at Michilimackinac and an incident that set off a chain reaction that destabilized Michilimackinac’s garrison for over a year. The two vignettes will be available at the start of the 2022 season. Later in 2022, an addition to the Archaeological Completion Report Series, by James Dunnigan concerning the Michilimackinac suburbs, will be available.

“We are grateful to be able to move forward with numerous new initiatives and upgrades this year,” Brisson said.

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.

Most major projects were funded, in part, by Mackinac Associates. Visit mackinacparks.com for a complete listing of updates and projects at Mackinac State Historic Parks. Fort Mackinac, the Biddle House, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum, Benjamin Blacksmith Shop, and The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum open May 3, Colonial Michilimackinac May 4, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse May 5, and Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park May 6.

For the Reading Room exhibit at Fort Mackinac: "Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibit, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities."

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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