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Mackinac State Historic Parks Announces Purchase of DePeyster Portraits

MACKINAW CITY, MICH. — 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. Mackinac Associates, the friends group to Mackinac State Historic Parks, centered its fall appeal on the portraits in order to help reimburse the collections fund.

The portraits are currently at a conservator and will be on display at The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum this summer. The museum opens for the 2023 season May 12.

More information about Mackinac State Historic Parks, including 2023 season dates and opportunities for tickets, can be found online at mackinacparks.com.

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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