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Mackinac State Historic Parks Celebrates 150 Years of the Creation of Mackinac National Park

MACKINAC ISLAND, MICH. — It was March 3, 1875, 150 years ago, that President Ulysses Grant signed Mackinac National Park into law, creating the second national park in the United States, three years after Yellowstone. This act set aside more than 50% of Mackinac Island for the enjoyment of the public, where they could enjoy the island's natural beauty and historical significance.

It was the creation of the national park that set the stage for the Mackinac Island known today.

“This anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on how the establishment of the national park laid the foundation of a legacy that continues to the present,” said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director.

To celebrate this milestone anniversary, Mackinac State Historic Parks will host special programs and events throughout the 2025 season. From daily walking tours at Fort Mackinac to immersive special events in the original national park, this celebration will explore this very unique time in Mackinac's history.

Every day at Fort Mackinac (10:30 a.m. May 2-June 6, 11:00 a.m. June 7-October 25), a daily program will explore the rise of tourism on Mackinac Island during the Mackinac National Park era and the preservation of the island and fort. Admission to Fort Mackinac is required.

The creation of the national park raised a host of questions: where, exactly were the national park lands? What would soldiers do to maintain it? How would the park be paid for? How would people

navigate it? How would the park be protected? To answer these questions and more, Mackinac State Historic Parks will host a series of special events throughout the 2025 season.

- June 25, 5:30 p.m. Welcome to Mackinac National Park, a guided bike ride through the original national park, highlighting features of the park and exploring the reasons the park was created.
- July 22, 5:30 p.m. Cottages of Mackinac Island, a walking tour of the east bluff exploring the creation of grant leaseholds and how this early effort to raise funds for the park continues today.
- August 20, 3:00 p.m. Discover Sugar Loaf, a leisurely walking tour to one of the most iconic rock formations in the former Mackinac National Park, Sugar Loaf.
- September 23, 5:30 p.m. Soldiers in the Park, a guided bike ride to various points in the park maintained by soldiers, exploring what their duties might have looked like.

All events are free and require no pre-registration. Bicycle tours require participants to bring a bike with them. All tours begin at the Fort Mackinac Avenue of Flags and leave promptly at the advertised start time.

To further explore the history of Mackinac National Park, Mackinac State Historic Parks has commissioned a new documentary, *A Pride of Purpose: The Story of Mackinac National Park*. The documentary will be shown daily at Fort Mackinac in the Soldiers' Barracks Theater.

At The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, the second floor Changing Gallery will host a juried exhibition, *Iconic Mackinac*. 150 years ago the many icons of Mackinac Island prompted the creation of Mackinac National Park. This protected icons such as Fort Mackinac, Fort Holmes, Arch Rock, Sugar Loaf and others, and spurred the creation of icons such as Grand Hotel and the East and West Bluff Cottages. Artists were invited to share their versions of *Iconic Mackinac* in any medium. This gallery will be open May 9-October 5. Admission required.

Mackinac National Park: 1875-1895 is the official book chronicling the history of the park. In the short history of Mackinac National Park no attempt has been made to compare it with Yellowstone or the three parks established in 1890 – Yosemite, Grant, or Sequoia in California. However, several features

about Mackinac made it quite different from the others. Written by Keith Widder, former Curator of History for Mackinac State Historic Parks, it will be available at the Fort Mackinac Museum Store or the Official State Park Store inside the Mackinac Island State Park Visitor's Center.

Additional merchandise will be available at the official museum stores for Mackinac State Historic Parks. In addition, flags, bunting, banners, and signs will be found throughout Fort Mackinac and Historic Downtown Mackinac.

More information can be found the Mackinac National Park: 150 page on mackinacparks.com. A downloadable version of this release can be found [here](#). Additional photos available upon request.

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, featuring the Mackinac Island Native American Museum, Benjamin Blacksmith Shop, The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum, McGulpin House, and Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island, and Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, Historic Mill Creek, 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 online at www.mackinacparks.com.

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