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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 1, 2026

## What's New for 2026?

MACKINAW CITY, MICH. — Your American Revolution begins at Mackinac.

Step into 1776 at Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City and follow the footsteps of British soldiers and French merchants. Climb the ramparts at Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island to learn how the events of 1776 and the American Revolution led directly to its creation. As part of America250, Mackinac State Historic Parks will present exciting new programs and events throughout 2026.

At Michilimackinac daily programs explore how the site remained loyal to the Crown. The Revolution, however, forced military leaders to rethink their defenses. French and Native residents faced difficult choices, taking sides or attempting to remain neutral.

Construction at Fort Mackinac on Mackinac did not begin until 1779, but the events of 1776 hastened its creation. Join us daily for programs that highlight the fort's construction during the Revolution and trace how Fort Mackinac changed over time.

### Special America250 Events

No celebration is complete without special events. As the nation prepares for the 250th anniversary on July 4, Colonial Michilimackinac and Fort Mackinac will do the same.

- **July 1:** *The Revolution and Michilimackinac* at Colonial Michilimackinac
- **July 2:** *Built Because of the Revolution: Fort Mackinac* at Fort Mackinac
- **July 3:** *Fire at Night* at Colonial Michilimackinac, a nighttime black-powder spectacular
- **July 4:** *A Star-Spangled Fourth of July* at Fort Mackinac



More information is available at [mackinacparks.com/america250](https://mackinacparks.com/america250).

America250 events are not just limited to July 4. Remember, in 1776, Michilimackinac remained loyal to the Crown, so we will commemorate King George III's birthday on June 4. Additional events include Maritime Michilimackinac July 11–12; vintage “base ball” at Fort Mackinac on July 25; a look at the people who worked for merchant John Askin on August 1–2 at Colonial Michilimackinac; Moonlit Michilimackinac on August 22; and a final *Fire at Night* on September 6.

### **Hands-On Revolutionary Experiences**

Want to step even deeper into 1776? Ever wonder what it feels like to fire the black-powder weapons used during the Revolution?

The *Guns Across the Straits* program offers one guest per night a private experience on the Michilimackinac beachfront. Participants fire a musket, wall gun, mortar, and—finally—the Michilimackinac cannon. Prefer just the cannon? We can do that. We also offer a Fort Mackinac cannon-firing experience. Visit [mackinacparks.com](https://mackinacparks.com) to learn more.

### **Curator-Led Tours**

For history enthusiasts, join our Chief Curator for a 90-minute guided tour of Colonial Michilimackinac on Wednesdays through the 2026 season, and at Fort Mackinac on Fridays. At Michilimackinac, learn how the British and their Anishnaabek allies responded to events on the Atlantic coast and the Great Lakes frontier. At Fort Mackinac, explore how the fort's military purpose evolved over time. A special ticket is required for these tours. Visit [mackinacparks.com](https://mackinacparks.com) for details.

Beginning in February, Mackinac State Historic Parks will debut *History at Home*, a new program series exploring topics related to the American Revolution. Program details and booking information will be available soon at [mackinacparks.com](https://mackinacparks.com).

### **Merchandise and Publications**

Exclusive America250 merchandise—including clothing, souvenirs, and publications—will be available at the Colonial Michilimackinac Visitor's Center, Hearthside Museum Store, Fort Mackinac Museum Store, and the Official State Park Store at the Mackinac Island State Park Visitor's Center.



Mackinac State Historic Parks has published several books on Mackinac's role in the American Revolution, including *At the Crossroads: Michilimackinac During the American Revolution*; *Colonial Michilimackinac*; *A Spirit of Dissent and Disobedience in the Troops*; *The Several Lives of the Sloop Welcome*; and *The Changing Face of Fort Mackinac*. All titles are available at [shop.mackinacparks.com](http://shop.mackinacparks.com) and museum stores.

## **2026 Transformations**

In 2026, several sites will debut major updates.

Historic Mill Creek officially becomes Dousman's Mill, named for the trader who owned it from the 1819 through the 1830s. Experience the sights, sounds, and smells of a working sawmill while learning about the people who lived and worked on this land. A fully remodeled Visitor's Center and restrooms will open later in the season. Dousman's Mill opens May 7.

The Mackinac Island State Park Visitor's Center, housed in a historic 1915 Coast Guard building, will reopen with a new timeline exhibit, modernized restrooms, and a renovated Official State Park Store. The information desk will also be more accessible. The Visitor's Center opens May 8.

At Fort Mackinac, two major additions debut in 2026. The 1859 Soldiers' Barracks will feature three new exhibits exploring the fort's military history. Outside the fort, guests will once again enter through the historic North Sally Port, restoring the north wall's 1880s appearance.

## **Site-by-Site Highlights**

Fort Mackinac continues its iconic cannon and rifle firings, with new tours and programs announced closer to the season. The Tea Room Restaurant will introduce new menu items, and the museum store will feature merchandise inspired by 19th-century America. Fort Mackinac opens May 1.

Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse opens May 5. Ongoing restoration returns the site to its 1910 appearance, including a new flagpole flying a 48-star flag (the flag from 1912-1959).

Colonial Michilimackinac anchors the America250 celebration with programs focused on 1776. Hear artillery fire, smell food cooking over open hearths, and experience life during a pivotal moment in American history. The archaeological field season begins June 6. Colonial Michilimackinac opens May 6.



Dousman's Mill offers programs exploring life beyond the sawmill, along with three miles of groomed trails. The site opens May 7.

The Richard & Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum opens May 8. The 2026 juried exhibition, *Echoes of the Island: A Journey Through Time*, explores Mackinac Island's layered history.

Historic Downtown Mackinac opens June 6, including the Biddle House, Benjamin Blacksmith Shop, American Fur Co. Store & Dr. Beaumont Museum, and McGulpin House.

The Milliken Nature Center opens May 8, and British Landing Nature Center opens June 6. Mackinac Island State Park remains open year-round.

### **Special Events**

The largest special event of the year is Fort Fright, held October 2–3 at Colonial Michilimackinac. Lanterns light your way through an 18<sup>th</sup>-century fort and fur trading village overrun by werewolves, witches, goblins, and ghouls. Fort Fright runs 6:30–9:30 p.m., with last admission at 8:30 p.m.

Other 2026 events include the Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge (May 9), Memorial Day Observance (May 25), Lilac Festival events (June 5–14), War of 1812 Weekend (June 13–14), Forgotten Features Bicycle Tour (July 12), Full Moon Over Mackinac (August 28), and A Colonial Christmas (December 12). Visit our events calendar for a full list.

### **Publications**

Mackinac State Historic Parks has published more than 100 books. In 2026, we will release a coffee-table book showcasing the seasons of Mackinac State Historic Parks, featuring photography by Sara Macy. A redesigned edition of *A Boy at Fort Mackinac* will also debut. All publications are available at [shop.mackinacparks.com](http://shop.mackinacparks.com).

### **Mackinac Associates**

Mackinac Associates supports most programs and projects at Mackinac State Historic Parks. Memberships begin at \$80 and include unlimited site admission, members-only events, free admission to



select events, museum store discounts, and a subscription to *Curiosities*. Learn more at [mackinacassociates.com](http://mackinacassociates.com).

A downloadable version of this release can be found here. Additional pictures available by 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 on the web at [www.mackinacparks.com](http://www.mackinacparks.com).*

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