

# CURIOSITIES

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## RECORD-BREAKING EVENTS ROUND-UP

Mackinac Associates members, staff and Board of Trustees know how to throw a great party, with 2019 being the best year yet for annual events.

The kick-off to the season, as always, was the G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration in June. It was held at the cottage of Michael and Wendy Young and Skip and Rachael Young on the West Bluff, on one of those gorgeous Mackinac Island evenings. The record-breaking crowd included Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, the first time the sitting governor has enjoyed the event. After the cocktail reception, the crowd moved across the street for dinner catered by Island House Hotel. Mackinac Associates board president Pete Pellerito spoke to the attendees, reiterating the importance of the organization, and thanked all of those in attendance.

On July 4 the annual Red, White & Blue event was held in front of Fort Mackinac, near the Officers' and Commanding Officers' Quarters.

This patriotic event continues to bring members from across the island together for a short but fun afternoon of hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and friendship. A record crowd of nearly 200 enjoyed the party. The holiday falls on a Saturday in 2020, and the event will take place as usual.

The finale for the season was the Annual Meeting, held at Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park in Mackinaw City. During the business portion of the meeting, board president Peter Pellerito presented Steve Murray, of Mackinac Island and Petoskey, and Sheldon Smith, of Gaylord, to the general membership as potential new board members, and the two were elected unanimously. After the business meeting, members enjoyed a catered meal from Audie's Restaurant, explored the grounds, and participated in the Adventure Tour.

Dates for 2020 events appear elsewhere in this issue of Curiosities, and are also online at [mackinacassociates.com](http://mackinacassociates.com).

**“THE ANNUAL EVENTS WERE A GREAT TIME TO SPEND TIME WITH FELLOW MEMBERS AND SHARE THE GOOD WORK THEY’VE HELPED US ACCOMPLISH.”**

– PHIL PORTER, DIRECTOR



Steve Murray (left), Sheldon Smith (right)

## ANNUAL MEETING

At the annual meeting August 18, Steve Murray, of Mackinac Island and Petoskey, and Sheldon Smith, of Gaylord, were unanimously voted to the Mackinac Associates Board of Trustees.

Murray is a fifth generation Mackinac Islander. His great grandfather built the Murray Hotel in 1859 and served as a sheriff of the Northwest Territory. His grandfather was a probate judge for Mackinac County for 40 years, and his father was a lawyer in Detroit who brought his family to the island every summer. Murray settled in Petoskey in 1988 and founded Michigan Outdoor Advertising. Along with his

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# ANNUAL MEETING

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wife Anne and four children, he built a home at British Landing, on the island's northwest shore, in 1995.

"I feel it's important to give back to the Mackinac community as my family did before me. I am not old enough to remember when the fort was abandoned but I know the story and am very impressed by the continuous improvements made by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission and more recently Mackinac Associates," Murray said. "I'm excited to be part of such a proactive group. (Current board member) Todd Petersen encouraged me to join Mackinac Associates, along with Fr. Jim Williams. Both encouraged me to believe in the fort's rich history and to play a role in its forward progress."

Sheldon Smith is an award-winning actor and narrator based for most of his career in Washington, D.C. Perhaps the nation's preeminent voice for Republican media campaigns, he has been heard in thousands of campaign commercials over the past forty-four years in all fifty states. His voice has also been heard on PBS, Detroit Public Television, Maryland Public Television, Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, National Geographic Channel and other broadcast and

cable outlets. He is the narrator of interpretive orientation films in several National Parks and the Eisenhower Museum and Library in Abilene, Kansas and countless corporate and institutional films. His work has won nineteen Telly Awards, two CINE Golden Eagles and numerous AAPC Pollie Awards and *Politics* magazine Reed Awards. He is a seven-time winner of the prestigious Peer Award for Narration. A former member of the National Board of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Smith has been a member of AFTRA and the Screen Actors Guild, now SAG-AFTRA, for more than fifty years. In 2010, Smith was presented the Howard Keel Award by Screen Actors Guild, only the third person so honored. He also narrated the 2019 documentary *Mackinac: Our Famous Island*, which Mackinac Associates helped to fund.

Smith was appointed to the Mackinac Island State Park Commission in 1974 and served until 1983. He was the youngest person ever elected its chairman. Smith and his wife Sue reside in Gaylord.

"I first came to Mackinac during my childhood with my grandparents, frequently returned while growing up and came to Mackinac on the *S.S. South American* for my high school senior trip," Smith said. "During the years I lived in Michigan, I frequently visited the island and mainland park sites and was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Park Commission in 1974, was elected chairman in 1976 and served until 1983."

During his time as chairman of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, he supported the formation of Mackinac Associates, and is looking forward to continuing to support the organization as a board member.

The annual meeting also represented the final official meeting for Mary Jane Barnwell and Mark Mercer as board members. Both served the maximum three terms, or nine years.

Mercer is a previous board president that was instrumental in the formation of Mackinac Associates. He is a dentist in St. Ignace. Barnwell owns and operates the Mackinac Island Bookstore.

"I would like to thank the two members who are going off the board as they have served the maximum number of terms," said Peter Pellerito, Mackinac Associates board president. "Mary Jane Barnwell and Mark Mercer and their contribution as board members have been critical to the growth of Mackinac Associates and we will greatly miss their contribution at board meetings."

Additionally, at the annual meeting, Pellerito highlighted the summer events (see related story), the generous support of members with the Biddle House appeal and the spring unrestricted appeal, and discussed the numerous projects Mackinac Associates helped fund. In related news, at the board meeting later that month, Pellerito, Harriet McGraw and Tom Lockwood were reappointed as president, vice president and secretary/treasurer, respectively.



## LEAVE A LEGACY

"For decades Mackinac has been our special place where we can unwind and rediscover the simple things that are most important to us. Spending several weeks a year enjoying Mackinac State Historic Parks allows us to recharge and manage the rigors of day-to-day life. Since we cannot imagine a world without Historic Mackinac, we are pleased to include Mackinac Associates as a major part of our estate plan."

— Mark and Tisha Benton

## VOLUNTEER THANK YOU

Thank you to the volunteers that helped with events and mailings during the 2019 season.

- Betty BeDour
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- Jate Robinson
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- Nancy Seiger

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS 2020 EVENTS

- **June 20** – G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration
- **July 4** – Red, White & Blue Celebration
- **August 15** – Mackinac Associates Annual Meeting



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# DIRECTOR'S OUTLOOK

Genealogy, the study and tracing of one's lines of descent or ancestry, has become increasingly popular in recent years. Document-rich sites like Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, and MyHeritage.com, contain billions of records that help individuals discover their family roots. The resources created to serve genealogists are extremely useful to professional historians looking to learn more about the human history of their fields of research. In writing *The Soldiers of Fort Mackinac, An Illustrated History*, I spent countless hours on Ancestry.com looking for information about the men who served at the island fort.

While writing the book, I discovered that more than 4,500 British and United States soldiers served at Fort Mackinac during its 115-year period of occupation. It is safe to say that there are hundreds of thousands of lineal descendants from those soldiers living today. While the vast majority are unaware of their Fort Mackinac connection, there are some, including several who live on the island and in the Straits of Mackinac region, who know about their Fort Mackinac connection. We would like to add to that list.

In an effort to identify and recognize those direct, lineal descendants we are creating an exclusive group called "The Company of Fort Mackinac Descendants." Membership in this group is reserved for those who have a direct line to an ancestor who served at the fort; in other words, a child, grandchild, great grandchild, etc. For example, even though I share a common ancestor with Lieutenant Calvin D. Cowles, who served at Fort Mackinac in the 1880s, I am not eligible through Cowles as he descended through a different line of the family. On the other hand, Mackinac Island resident Candy

Smith is eligible, as she is a direct descendant of Ordnance Sergeant William Marshall who served at Fort Mackinac from 1848 to 1884.

Membership in "The Company of Fort Mackinac Descendants" offers something more than a family tree diagrammed on a piece of paper. It provides a connection with a real place. Members have a unique opportunity to walk the grounds and inspect the buildings used by their ancestors. They can see where their forebears fired cannons, marched sentry beats, assembled for reveille at dawn, performed fatigue duty, and visited the post surgeon. Staff historians will provide access to our archival resources, including muster rolls, rosters, military correspondence, diaries, letters, and photographs, that will provide meaning and context to their ancestor's service at Fort Mackinac. Membership benefits include a



**"IF YOU HAVE AN ANCESTOR THAT YOU THINK MIGHT HAVE SERVED AT FORT MACKINAC, DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US."**

— PHIL PORTER, DIRECTOR

certificate documenting the member's ancestry connection to Fort Mackinac, access to archival materials for additional research, and complimentary admission to Fort Mackinac. If you have an ancestor that you think might have

served at Fort Mackinac, do not hesitate to contact us. We have information on almost every United State soldier who served at Fort Mackinac.

## PHOTO ALBUM: THE DEER PARK



Deer are an infrequent sight in Mackinac Island State Park today, but for several decades visitors could see an entire herd in the "Deer Park" to the northwest of Fort Mackinac. The park was initially authorized by the commission in 1901, and was in operation within a few years. In 1944, owing to a "lack of interest" by park visitors, the park was closed and the remaining deer "released" on the island. These pictures, from about 1920, are from the albums of Park Superintendent Frank Kenyon.

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For membership information,  
call 231-436-4100

*Published by Mackinac Associates. Subscription is a membership benefit. Membership levels include Friend, \$70; Mackinac Heritage, \$85; Voyageur, \$95; Sentinel, \$200; Explorer, \$400; Commandant's Circle, \$650; Steward, \$1,000; Guardian, \$2,500; Patron, \$5,000; Benefactor, \$10,000. Other membership benefits include unlimited free admission to Colonial Michilimackinac, Fort Mackinac, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse and The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum; 15 percent merchandise and publications discount at the six Mackinac State Historic Parks' museum stores; invitation to Mackinac Associates special events; and discounted admission for member's guests (excluding Heritage level).*

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