

# CURIOSITIES

VOLUME XLII


**MACKINAC**  
 ASSOCIATES

2023 ISSUE 3

Friends Preserving and Sharing Mackinac's Heritage

## NEW TRUSTEES ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING



Outgoing president Jeb Burns with incoming vice president Skip Young



Former Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Phil Porter presenting at the annual meeting

**E**rin Burns, a life-long resident of Michigan, and Shannon Haan Westblade, a third-generation owner/innkeeper on Mackinac Island, were unanimously voted to the Mackinac Associates Board of Trustees at its annual meeting August 12.

Burns has been a frequent visitor to Mackinac Island since childhood. A graduate of Michigan State University, Burns has held sales and marketing jobs with the Campbell Soup Company and Time Warner, followed by several years with the American Cancer Society, specializing in planned giving. She transitioned to association management after spending time raising her sons, and is currently the Executive Director for the Michigan History Foundation. Erin and her husband Jeb have been members of Mackinac Associates for almost two decades and have passed on their love of history and the straits region to their twin sons, Thomas and Conor (aka "Dock Boy" with the Fort Mackinac *Never Sweats* "base ball" team).

"It's an honor and a privilege to serve on the board of Mackinac Associates. It's a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community that has brought so much joy to my family," Burns said. "I look forward to working with such a talented group to preserve the history of Mackinac."

Westblade is the owner/innkeeper of Haan's 1830 Inn on Mackinac Island. Growing up in a historic bed and breakfast on Mackinac Island inspired Shannon's love for history and the natural world and her passion to preserve it. Her degree in history, with a focus on American frontiers, has amplified this passion. Shannon and her husband Lucas have two kids, Gideon and Heidi.

"I am excited to be a part of Mackinac Associates, with the goal of inspiring others to join in the mission of preserving our parks for generations to come," Westblade said.

Burns and Westblade replace Jeb Burns, who was term-limited off, and Natalia Wohletz, who chose not to run for reelection. Jeb Burns served as board president in 2022, among other board leadership roles.

The meeting was held at Wawashkamo Golf Club, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2023. The meeting included a presentation from Phil Porter, former Mackinac State Historic Parks Director and current historian at Wawashkamo. Members were also invited to test out hickory stick putters on the putting green. Jeb Burns highlighted the summer events and the generous support of members over the past year. Burns, Wohletz, and Lieder were presented plaques for their service on the board.

At the regular Associates board meeting August 25, Harbor Springs resident and St. Ignace native Wendie Keen was appointed to the board, filling the seat of Kathy Lieder, who resigned from the board to focus on family commitments.

Keen's love of the Straits of Mackinac began early on. Her first visit to the island was when she was four years old and as a teen she spent summers working on the island. Keen shares her love of Michigan with her husband, Brad, six grown children, their spouses, and eight grandchildren. Wendie and Brad were married on the island and continue the tradition of visiting as often as they can.

Professionally, Keen has served in leadership roles in the resort industry at historic Californian resorts: The Claremont, Sonoma

Mission Inn, and Ranch Las Palmas.

Returning to Northern Michigan in 2008, Wendie now applies her talents as vice president of spa and owner services with Boyne Resorts, supporting resorts in Michigan, Maine and Montana. She also has a passion for real estate and has restored numerous historic homes within Northern Michigan.

"Mackinac Island is one of my favorite places in the world," Keen said. "This sacred area with its rich history and natural beauty is so very important, and I am honored to join this board and dedicate time to its preservation and enhancement."

"Erin, Shannon, and Wendie will make excellent additions to the Mackinac Associates board," said Steve Brisson, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director. "All have deep connections to Mackinac Island and the Straits of Mackinac area and bring unique skills and backgrounds to the board."

"We thank Jeb, Natalia, and Kathy for their dedication to the Mackinac Associates board," Brisson continued. "We look forward to their continued involvement with Mackinac Associates in the future."

In addition to appointing Keen, the board elected the following officers at its regular meeting: Todd Callewaert, president; Skip Young, vice president; Brian Bailey, treasurer; and Nancy Porter, secretary. Other members of the Board of Trustees include Nicole Doud, David Levy, Heather Martin, Stephen Murray, Joan Slater, and Sheldon Smith.

## 2023 EVENTS ROUND-UP



Mackinac Associates 2023 events allowed its members to tour one of the most beautiful homes on Mackinac Island, celebrate Independence Day with friends and fellow members, and enjoy Wawakashmo Golf Club during its 125th anniversary season; They also provided perks to members and the Straits of Mackinac communities by hosting behind-the-scenes tours and sponsoring community events.

The highlight of the social calendar, as always, was the G. Mennen Williams Mackinac Celebration. Dan Musser and Marlee Brown generously opened up their stunning home to nearly 300 guests. Catered by Grand Hotel, members enjoyed cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, and music provided by members of the Grand Hotel Orchestra.

On July 4 the annual Red, White & Blue event was held at the Huron Road Pavilion. 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. Island House Hotel catered the event.

In late July the annual LaFramboise party was held at the beautiful home of Mary Callewaert. This party, for Mackinac Associates' highest level members, donors, and legacy members, featured cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and short presentations from Steve Brisson and Todd Callewaert.

The Annual Meeting was held August 12 at Wawakashmo Golf Club. See the related story in this issue.

Mackinac Associates served as sponsor for a September 12 Business After Hours, hosted by the Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce at Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse. Mackinac

Associates also provided sponsorship for the 125th anniversary of the automobile ban events on Mackinac Island.

Members were treated to behind-the-scenes looks at the Heritage Center, home to Mackinac State Historic Parks' collection, during the summer.



In Mackinaw City, members were able to tour Colonial Michilimackinac's gardens with Curator of Interpretation LeeAnn Ewer.

## EXPLORE HISTORIC TRADITIONS AT A COLONIAL CHRISTMAS

Mackinac State Historic Parks doesn't stop interpreting the history of the Straits of Mackinac just because it's winter! Join us for A Colonial Christmas, taking place at Colonial Michilimackinac on Saturday, December 9, from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

A Colonial Christmas will immerse guests into the holiday traditions of Michilimackinac in the 17th and 18th centuries. Visitors will be able to tour the site at their own pace, heading into buildings that will feature interpreters describing various Christmas traditions and try era-appropriate snacks and drinks throughout their visit.

Upon entering the site, lanterns will light a path to the South Southwest Rowhouse, where guests can purchase tickets and receive their first goodies. Dedicated photo spots will also

dot the entry into the fort, allowing for that perfect winter photo opportunity.

Once inside the fort, guests can head to the Southwest Rowhouse, where they'll learn about French-Canadian traditions; the Guardhouse, where British civilian and military traditions will be discussed; the Barracks, where German military traditions will be presented; the Northwest Rowhouse, where crafts will be available, allowing guests to take home a piece of their visit; Northwest Rowhouse Unit A, where they'll learn about French New Year's celebrations, including a chance to cut into the King's cake to find a prize; the Priest's House, where wassail will be distributed; and Ste. Anne's Church, where the church will be set up for holiday mass. Finally, out on the parade ground, a fire will be set up and stories of the first Christmas at Mackinac (1675) will be told, and games like trap ball will be available for guests to play.

This event is free for Mackinac Associates, excluding the Heritage-level season pass.

## 2024 EVENTS

**Wednesday, June 19, 2024**

*Mackinac Rocks!* Art Contest  
Open House & Reception

**Saturday, June 22, 2024**

G. Mennen Williams Mackinac  
Celebration

**Thursday, July 4, 2024**

Red, White and Blue Celebration

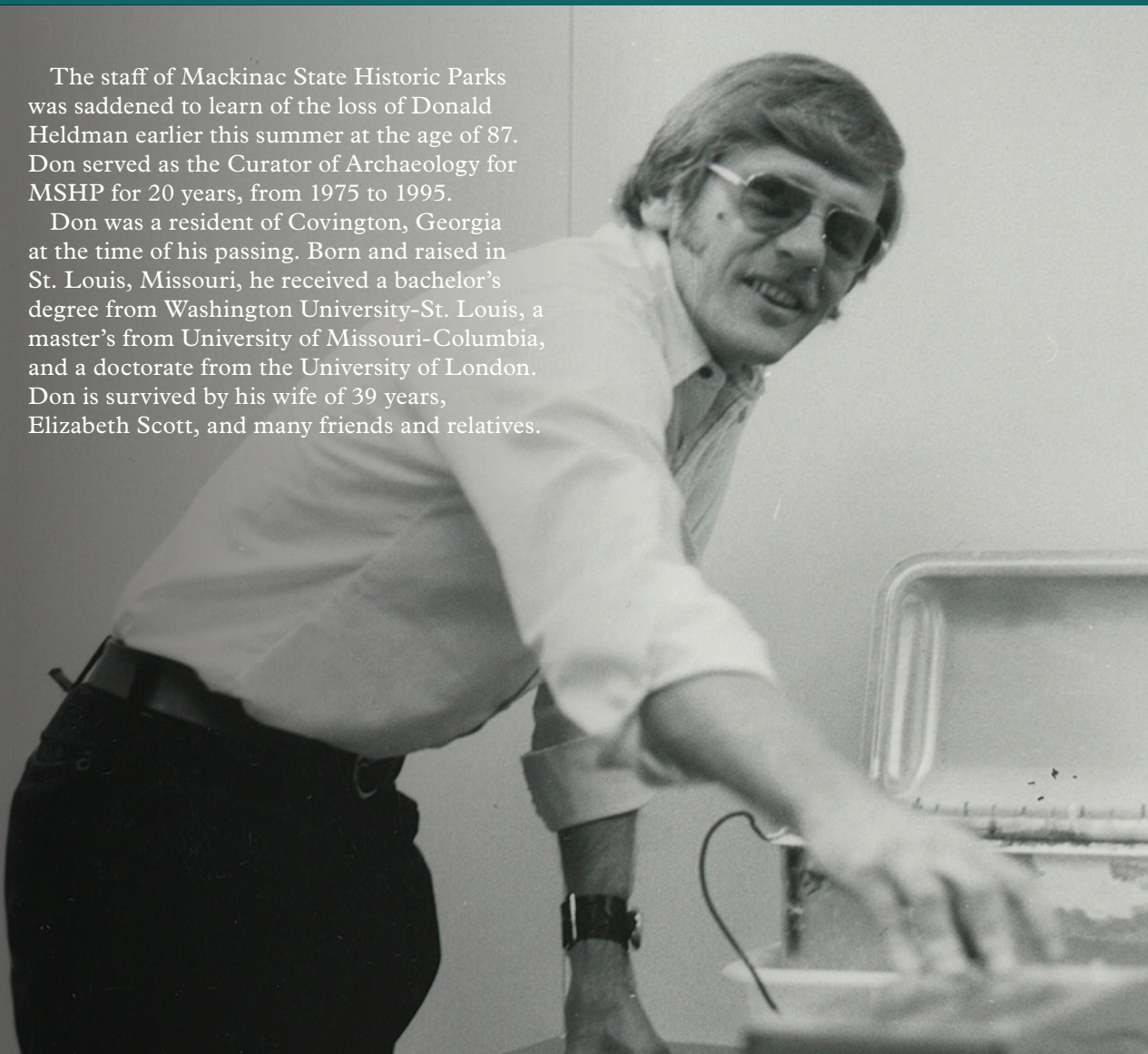
**Saturday, August 17, 2024**

Mackinac Associates Annual Meeting

For more information, visit  
[www.mackinacassociates.com/events](http://www.mackinacassociates.com/events)

The staff of Mackinac State Historic Parks was saddened to learn of the loss of Donald Heldman earlier this summer at the age of 87. Don served as the Curator of Archaeology for MSHP for 20 years, from 1975 to 1995.

Don was a resident of Covington, Georgia at the time of his passing. Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, he received a bachelor's degree from Washington University-St. Louis, a master's from University of Missouri-Columbia, and a doctorate from the University of London. Don is survived by his wife of 39 years, Elizabeth Scott, and many friends and relatives.



## LEGACY SOCIETY

"Recently, I went through a process to reevaluate my estate plan and increase charitable giving at my death. It was natural that Mackinac Associates topped the list of organizations that will receive gifts. As a member of one of the first Girl Scout troops to serve as the Governor's Honor Guard in 1974, I can say that Mackinac changed my life. I returned to work at the State Park in college and met my late husband at the Avenue of the Flags behind Fort Mackinac. Mackinac's history, natural beauty, and rhythms of summer visits shaped our family. It is my pleasure to support the continuing preservation of Mackinac State Historic Parks."

Ruth D. Fitzgerald





# DIRECTOR'S OUTLOOK:

As reported last fall, we were fortunate to receive a special \$35-million appropriation for infrastructure improvements throughout our parks. Over the course of the last year, we have been focused on initiating the first round of these projects. We have spent many hours with architects, engineers, and our colleagues at the Department of Technology, Management & Budget. The design phase has wrapped on the first of these, and I'm pleased to report that earth is turning.

The new Milliken Nature Center at Arch Rock broke ground in early September, and the project is making steady progress. It is scheduled to open in early May of next year. The building will provide much needed upgrades to the restrooms at the most visited natural feature in the park. The nature center portion of the building will allow our guests to delve into the geology of Mackinac Island. The exhibit is funded through Mackinac Associates.

On October 30 we broke ground on an addition to the Southwest Rowhouse at Colonial Michilimackinac. The site of the 1770s building was excavated from 1960 through 1963. This is our first eighteenth-century reconstruction at the site in ten years. It will initially contain an exhibit on slavery at Michilimackinac, also funded by Mackinac Associates.

There are several other additional projects that are shovel ready and scheduled to begin in the spring. Bids for paving of select roads in Mackinac Island State Park have been let and will commence in April or May, depending on the weather. This will include sections of Fort Street, Huron Road, Cemetery Road, and Cupid's Pathway. We also hope to break ground in May on an addition to the Petersen Center in Mackinaw City. This will provide more archaeological storage, expansion of the Widder Library, and badly needed staff support space. On the island we will begin construction of a new Park Field Office and a Waste Management Facility. Both these operations are currently in sub-standard locations. The current field office is housed within the 1870s Noncommissioned Officers' Quarters. It is not accessible, cramped,

and not energy efficient. The current waste management operation is housed in a warehouse, poorly designed for the processing of the tons of trash collected in the park each summer. The new facility will increase the efficiency and sanitation of this process. In addition, both current facilities will be repurposed.

Three other projects are in the final design phase and likely to commence next fall. Major renovations will begin on the 1934 Scout Barracks behind Fort Mackinac. This work includes adding fire suppression to the building, new bathrooms, and upgrades to the kitchen. Work on the Fort Mackinac Soldiers' Barracks will provide the first major update to the restroom facility since the late 1960s. The entire interior will also be remodeled for new exhibits and a multi-purpose room/theatre. The Colonial Michilimackinac Visitor's Center was built in 1971. Interior renovations were last made in 1988, but little has been done since then. The new project will include heating and air conditioning and installation of restroom facilities inside the center, rather than in the adjacent parking lot.

Many of the projects noted above are overtly



**“THESE PROJECTS WILL GREATLY IMPROVE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE.”**

– STEVE BRISSON, DIRECTOR

public facing, such as paving, upgrades to the visitor's center, and the new Milliken Nature Center. While the other projects are more behind the scenes, they are still very much in support of our mission to serve the public. They will improve many aspects of our operation, from research and preservation to trash handling. Many more smaller-scale maintenance projects will be underway in the next six months including roofing and painting of numerous

historic structures, masonry repairs to the Fort Mackinac walls, and upgrades to HVAC and fire suppression systems. This winter we will also initiate the next round of projects, including upgrades to the visitor's centers on Mackinac Island and Historic Mill Creek. Altogether, these projects will greatly improve the visitor experience and enhance our ability to preserve, protect and present the treasures under our care.

## CITY OF CHEBOYGAN FERRY, EARLY 1900's

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Michigan State Highway Ferry system that transported automobiles across the Straits of Mackinac from Mackinaw City to St. Ignace. The first vessel that was used was the Ariel which could carry twenty automobiles. As traffic increased, larger vessels were purchased including the Ann Arbor No. 4 which had served as a railroad ferry on Lake Michigan. The ship had a storied past having endured a terrible storm the night of February 14, 1923. The ship lost one of its railroad cars off the stern and ended up hitting the Frankfort, Michigan pier and sinking. It was raised and eventually came to the straits in 1937 where it was renamed the City of Cheboygan. The vessel served the ferry system until the Mackinac Bridge was opened in 1957. The ship was later used to store potatoes on Washington Island, Wisconsin before being scrapped in 1973.



## MACKINAC ASSOCIATES BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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For membership information,  
call 231-436-4100

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MackinacAssociates.com



Mackinac Associates  
P.O. Box 567  
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# VOLUNTEER THANK YOU

Thank you to Mackinac Associates members that helped at events this summer. From the Fort2Fort Five Mile Challenge to mailings and Adopt-a-Road, we appreciate you volunteering your time!

- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| • Lisa Craig Brisson    | • Mike Murray       |
| • Susan Brochu-Hoshield | • Sarah Ombry       |
| • Mara Goetz-Froeschke  | • Lisa Ortlieb      |
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Do you have friends or family that would enjoy the benefits of a Mackinac Associates membership?

*Give the Gift of Membership*

Visit [www.MackinacAssociates.com](http://www.MackinacAssociates.com) to learn more:

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

THE FOLLOWING GIFTS WERE GIVEN BETWEEN MAY 1ST AND SEPTEMBER 30TH 2023

### Unrestricted Donations

Victor and Michelle Adamo  
Brian and Jeri-Lynn Bailey  
Kelly and Courtney Beattie  
George Blair  
Paul and Jacalyn Bragg  
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### Education Fund

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Brian and Linda Sorensen  
Thom Sumbler

### Scout Barracks Preservation Fund

Boy Scout Troop #111  
Girl Scout Troop #147  
Girl Scout Troop #50001

### Wish List

Maria Bonus  
Jan Burdzinski and Carole Iverson  
Seth Hippensteel  
David and Cynthia Monaghan  
Ronald Sell

### In Honor of Tom Byrum

Michael and Mary Lynn Harrison

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