

# MACKINAC ISLAND NATIVE AMERICAN MUSEUM



# PROJECT PURPOSE

This exhibit will enable Mackinac State Historic Parks to continue its effort to more fully and accurately tell the story of Native Americans at Mackinac Island. The story of the Anishinaabek (Odawa, Ojibway and Potawatomi) is a rich and important chapter in the overall history of Mackinac Island. We will share this story through engaging interactive exhibits and provide a more diverse and compelling visitor experience and increase attendance.



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# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Mackinac Island has been a sacred and historically significant place for Anishinaabek people for centuries. Oral tradition, supported by archaeological evidence, speaks of Native settlement dating back to 1000 A.D. From this point forward, Mackinac Island occupied a central place in the Anishinaabek world.

The exhibition “Agatha’s Mackinac” tells the Anishinaabek story of Mackinac Island from pre-contact to today through the experiences and relationships of Agatha Biddle (1797-1873), an Odawa woman whose life provides a lens through which to understand and appreciate this rich story.



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# PROJECT LOCATION

The Biddle House is a historic structure in the Mackinac Island State Park. One of Mackinac Island's oldest buildings, the structure has a rich architectural and cultural history. The home of Edward and Agatha Biddle, the building is conveniently located on Mackinac Island's Market Street and easily accessible to all visitors.



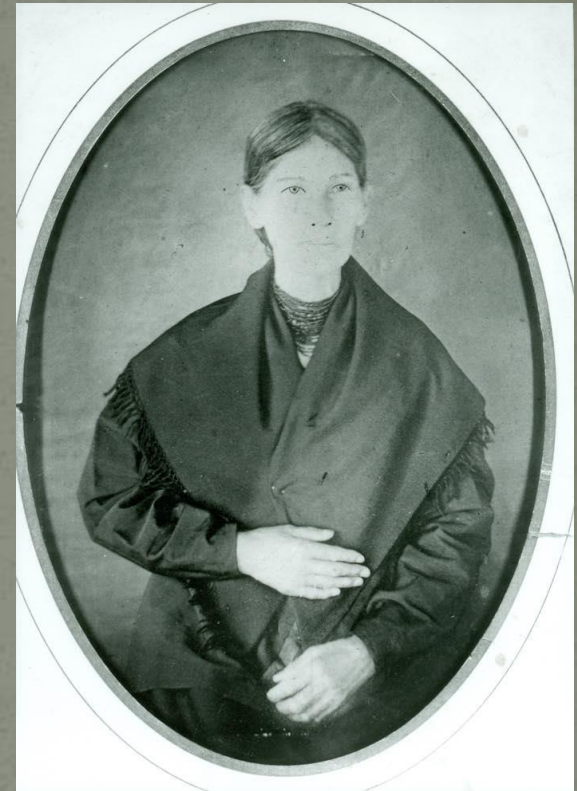
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# AGATHA BIDDLE

Agatha de la Vigne married Edward Biddle in 1819. Of French and Odawa ancestry, Agatha embraced traditional Anishinaabek values in the way she lived her life. Her hospitality and gift-giving were recognized by all, especially tribal people visiting the island. She fed and housed many a visitor, as well as taking in many orphaned children. She was an invaluable partner to her husband as she served as a cultural intermediary providing him with access to a trade network with her Odawa kin. Her leadership skills were confirmed when she was appointed as a chief of the Mackinac band of Ojibway and Odawa in the 1830s.

Through her home on Market Street Agatha helped her people navigate through the complex and difficult transitions created by the 1836 Treaty of Washington in which Native peoples ceded over fourteen million acres of land to the United States. This treaty paved the way for the creation of the State of Michigan.



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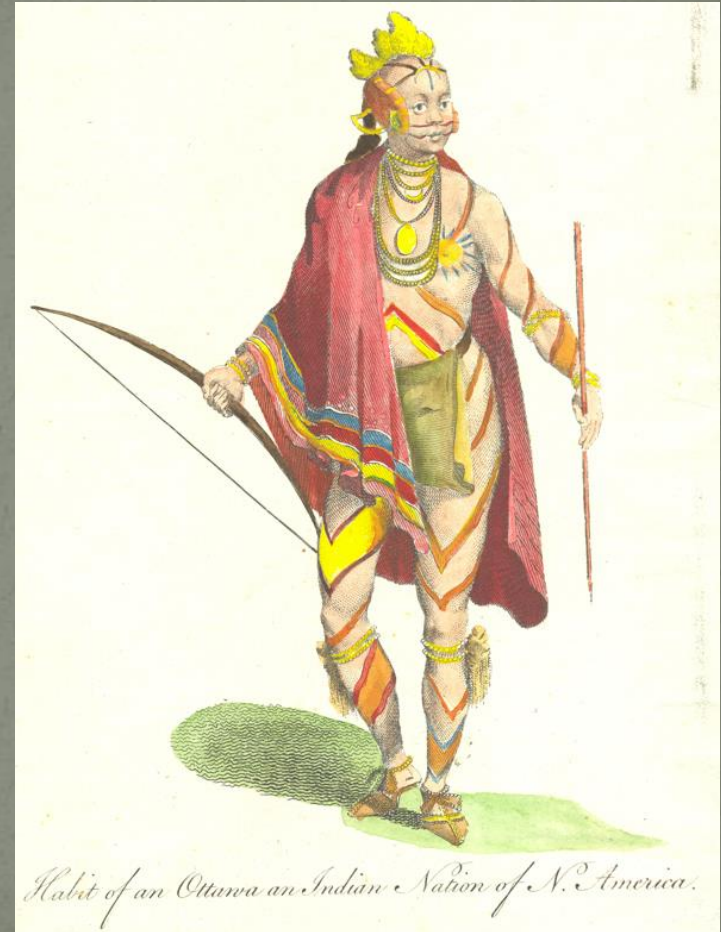


# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

The storyline of the exhibit will focus on six themes explaining how and why Mackinac Island has been a significant place for Anishinaabek people for centuries. This was a place to live, a place for worship, a place to encounter other nations, a place to gather for battle, a place for treaties, and a place for blended cultures.



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*Habit of an Ottawa an Indian Nation of N. America.*

# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

**Place to Live** – Drawn by the climate, geology, and an abundance of fish, Mackinac Island was a seasonal village for Woodland Period Indians. Ancient pottery sherds are testimony to their presence on the island more than 1,000 years ago.



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# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

**Place of Worship** – Mackinac Island has always been a sacred place for Anishinaabek people and figures prominently in their ancient spiritual traditions. Here, too, Native people encountered Christian Missionaries and many, including Agatha Biddle, became members of the island's Roman Catholic community.



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# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

**A Gathering Place** – Centrally located on the upper Great Lakes, the Straits of Mackinac brought together French, British and American fur traders with the Anishinaabek. Through encounter and accommodation, both Euro-American and Native people benefited from the trade. The partnership of Agatha and Edward Biddle was a microcosm of this successful partnership.



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# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

**A Place of War** – The encounter of cultures at Mackinac inevitably led to conflict. From pre-contact inter-tribal wars to alliances with French, British, and American armies, Native warriors were involved in conflicts that impacted the settlement and control of the upper Great Lakes.



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# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

**A Place of Treaty** – Through the 1836 Treaty of Washington Anishinaabek people ceded large portions of the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan to the federal government in exchange for annual payments. The payments and other communications were made through Odawa and Ojibway chiefs including Agatha Biddle. This treaty had a significant impact on the Anishinaabek people that is still felt today.



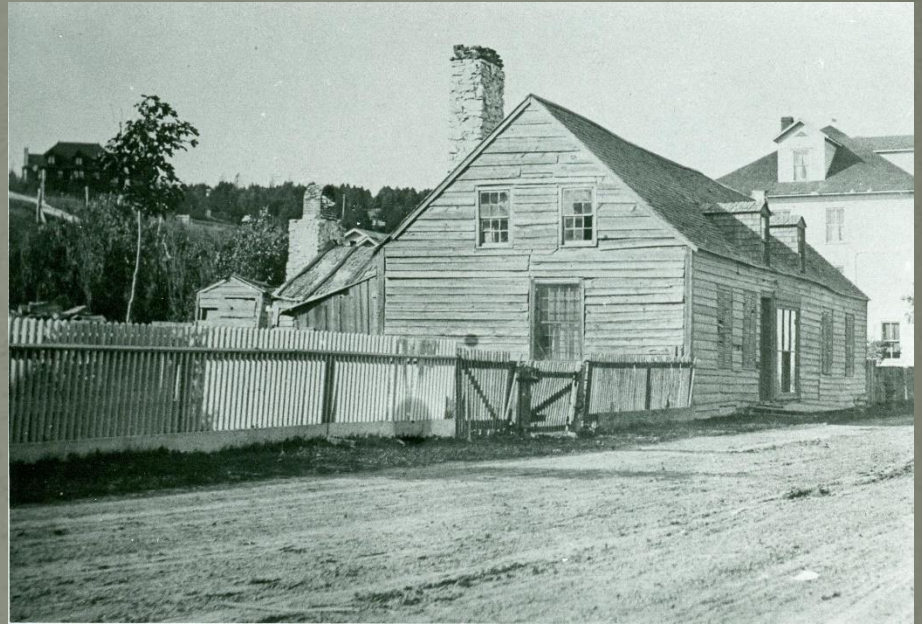
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# INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

## **A Place of Blended Cultures –**

Edward and Agatha Biddle represent the coming together and accommodation of two diverse cultures. This fascinating story was played out in their Market Street home where Edward managed his civic and business affairs while Agatha exhibited traditional Anishinaabek hospitality and the obligations of kinship.



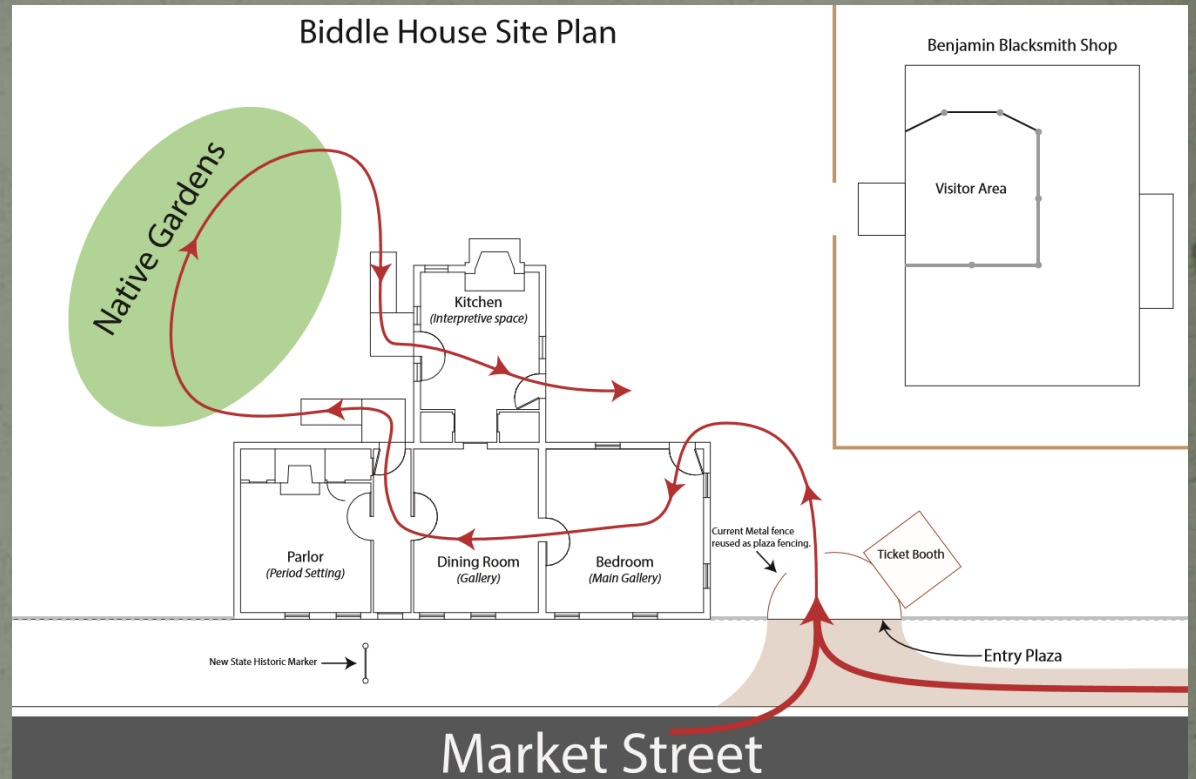
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# PROJECT DESIGN

The exhibition will include a variety of interpretive elements. This includes artifact-based displays, interactive exhibits, Period settings, and live interpretation.

Additionally, new landscape features will be added including a Native Gardens area, new state historical marker, entrance plaza and ticket booth. This will improve visitor access and use of the site.



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# PROJECT DESIGN



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# PROJECT DESIGN



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# PROJECT STAFF

The project will be supervised by Deputy Director Steve Brisson with assistance from Museum Historian Craig Wilson, Exhibit Designer Keeney Swearer, and Registrar Brian Jaeschke. The Mackinac Island State Park operations crew will handle all of the construction tasks under the supervision of park manager Sue Topham.

Eric Hemenway, who has been a consultant throughout the project design phase, will continue to assist through the final design and fabrication process. Eric is the director of Repatriation, Records and Archives for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians.



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# PROJECT TIMETABLE

Fall-Winter 2018

Interpretive Script development and Project Fundraising

Spring-Summer 2019

Exhibit and landscape design

Fall-Winter 2019

Selection of historic objects, construction of display cases, select and work with vendors for interactive components. Construct new entry plaza, ticket booth, porches, and gardens

Spring 2020

Install exhibit and display, complete landscaping, plant gardens.

Summer 2020

Grand Opening and dedication of new museum.



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# PROJECT BUDGET

## Exhibits and Displays

- Interpretive Panels Indoor and Outdoor - \$20,000
- Two Audio Visual Interactive Displays - \$32,000
- Acrylic cubes, artifact mounts, display glass - \$15,000
- Exhibit casework and barriers - \$5,000
- Gallery and other interior lighting - \$4,000

## Exterior Improvements and Landscaping

- Entry Plaza and Ticket Booth - \$5,000
- Native Garden - \$2,500
- Exterior repairs - \$10,000
- New State of Michigan historic Plaque (exterior) - \$4,500

Total Project Cost - \$98,000

Donors will be prominently recognized  
in a display panel in the gallery



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For more information about the Native American Museum project please contact:

Phil Porter, Director

Mackinac State Historic Parks

P O Box 370

Mackinac Island MI 49701

Phone: 906-847-3328 (May-October)

231-436-4100 (November-April)

Or Email: [porterp@Michigan.gov](mailto:porterp@Michigan.gov)

To make a donation in support of this project:

Make checks payable to Mackinac Associates (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that supports the programs of Mackinac State Historic Parks)

P O Box 567

Mackinaw City MI 49701

or make a donation on line at [mackinacassociates.com](http://mackinacassociates.com)

All donors will be recognized on a display at the site.

Gifts of \$25,000 or greater will offer gallery naming rights. Please contact

Mackinac State Historic Parks for details.



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