

2nd Annual Fudge Festival To Feature Stone Skipping Contest, Tours

Sweet Treat Has Own Celebration This Month

Plans are underway for the 2nd annual Fudge Festival August 26 to 28, to celebrate fudge on Mackinac Island. One of the highlights will be a golden ticket contest.

"Daddy. . . I want the golden ticket and I want it now!" will feature five participating Island fudge shops. From 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, August 27, five golden tickets will be hidden in fudge boxes. Purchasers of the winning boxes will receive a 2006 visitor package that includes two nights for four people, ferry tickets, a carriage tour, kayaking, lunch, fudge, and a

chance to win \$10,000 in the Mackinac Heritage Boating Foundation raffle. Participating fudge shops are JoAnn's Fudge, May's Candy Shop, Murdick's Fudge, Murray Hotel, and Ryba's Fudge.

That evening, from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., Maycroft Square Tappers will be performing at Mission Point Theater, followed at 7 p.m. with a performance by the Fine Arts Academy of Dance. The Children's Ballet Theatre of Michigan will perform Sunday, August 28, at 1 p.m., also at Mission Point Theater. All three performances are free.

A stone skipping competition will be held Saturday, from 10 a.m. to noon.

A feather masked wine and fudge tasting and feather sword fencing competition will be held Sunday at the Inn at Stonecliffe. Feather masks are available for purchase at the hotel. Fudge and wine will be paired, and a sword fencing

with ostrich feather competition will award the winners a vacation on Mackinac for two.

Fudge dinners will be held Friday, August 26, at 6 p.m. at Village Inn, and Saturday, August 27, at Mary's Bistro, also at 6 p.m.

Fudge drink specials at bars and restaurants, special fudge treatments at Island spas, hiking and bicycle tours led by Doc Crain, and an architectural walking tour will also be on tap for the weekend.

Blacksmiths Share Skills at Convention

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dove into classwork, books, and attending reenactments to learn as much as he could.

Others began earlier in life. Ms. Grupp's cousins and an uncle were involved in the trade, and she tagged along as a child. Mr. Carr had a childhood interest, too.

"I always played with metal," he said. "When I was 14, I was scrapping out cars and started building race cars. I did it as a hobby."

Since so many do engage in blacksmithing as a hobby, there is a wide range of experience. Some, like Mr. Cline, have been working at blacksmithing for more than two decades. Others, Mr. Carr included, are professionals, and Ms. Grupp has been toying with blacksmithing on and off for 11 years, with years of inactivity owing to the birth of her children.

But the expertise, or lack thereof, contributes to a good mix at the convention.

"We try to let the newer people jump in where they have an interest, or with something they haven't done before," said Mr. Cline. "We never tell anyone what to do. It's not that kind of group; it's very open. We want to get the projects done, but we also want everyone doing what they enjoy doing."

Mr. Carr agreed. He comes to volunteer at conventions such as these, instead of being paid for similar work back

home, for the interactions with other smiths.

"This is my sixth year up here, and I've really had a lot of fun," said Mr. Carr. "The friendship has always been fun. You're always learning, and working with other smiths."

Ms. Grupp, as one of the less experienced smiths, said that this open, friendly communication has helped significantly.

"There are no trade secrets," she said. "If I ask these guys, they'll teach me. And I love working in the groups, because everyone brings their own ideas and it all meshes together."

The convention on Mackinac was the brainchild of Islander Dennis Bradley, former Benjamin Blacksmith Shop worker and now the airport manager for the Mackinac

Island State Park Commission. There are other blacksmith conventions in Michigan, but most of them are down south, in the Grand Rapids or Detroit areas. The convention on the Island provides an opportunity for smiths in the northern part of the state to get together and work the craft.

During their first convention here, the blacksmiths created the fish weathervane that can be seen atop the Officer's Stone Quarters at Fort Mackinac, just above the tea room. Mr. Cline said a fish is depicted because, historically, that is what existed at the fort when soldiers were stationed here.

For future projects, smiths will continue their work on portable iron fences, and maybe will create a second weathervane for Fort Mackinac.

Ocho Rios Beaches, Waterfalls

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and now boasts more varieties of ferns than any other location in the world (more than 500 native species).

St. Ann was the birthplace of national hero Marcus Garvey, who is regarded today as the father of black liberation. Nine Miles, another nearby area, is the hometown of the legendary Bob Marley. He went to seek his fortunes in Kingston (the rest is history). St. Ann's Bay is also the first place Christopher Columbus landed on his second voyage to Jamaica.

There is so much more that can be said about this beautiful part of the island of Jamaica, but as usual, I'll leave a little bit for you to seek out and discover.

An Old Jamaican Saying
"Di higher di monkey climb,

di more im expose."

Translated meaning: The higher the monkey climbs up the tree, the more he is openly exposed.

There are no monkeys indigenous to Jamaica, however, the expression does serve its purpose in describing the kind of exposure (whether good or bad) that comes as anyone rises up the ladder of fame and stature.

Please feel free to send me your feedback, suggestions, or comments by e-mail to: blairyou@hotmail.com.

Until next week, Stay Irie!

Ralston Blair is a Jamaican writer and journalist who has worked the past several summers on Mackinac Island. He is writing this year from Jamaica. Ideas and comments about his column can also be delivered in care of the Town Crier.



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