

Planners Should Decide What Point in History They Want Island To Depict

Landmark: From page 1

today," Nore Winter, an urban design and preservation consultant in Denver, told the *Town Crier*. Mr. Winter specializes in preservation services for local governments.

Then, the Island's zoning ordinance would have to be updated to reflect the historic preservation standards set by the guidelines, said Rick Neumann, the city's architect, who attended Thursday's meeting, along with Planning Commissioners Michael Straus, Lee Finkel, Jim "Bam" Bazinaw, Mary Dufina, Trish Martin, Jim Pettit, city building inspector Dennis Dombroski, and city attorney Tom Evashevski.

Experts attending the work session with Mr. Winter were Dena Sanford, architectural historian for the National Park Service's Midwestern office, based in Omaha, Nebraska, and State Historic Preservation Office representatives Robert McKay and Amy Arnold.

Mackinac Island is one of 2,347 nationally recognized historic landmarks in the country. There are 36 landmarks in Michigan, including Grand Hotel (1989), Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City (1960), St. Ignace Mission (1960), and St. Marys Falls Canal (1966) in Sault Ste. Marie.

What separates Mackinac Island from most other National Historic Landmarks is its diversity in history, said Ms. Sanford. "It's unique in that it's a National Historic Landmark that relates to America's prehistory to the 1960s, from fur trading to recreational development, it's still all there," said Ms. Sanford. "You don't find that in many National Historic Landmarks, that cover that much of a range of American history."

The significance of Mackinac Island's history to American history can be traced even before the American Revolution, when Indian nations settled the land. The Island also played an integral role in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, as the British-built Fort Mackinac was occupied both by American and British forces.

Mackinac Island has the highest concentration of pre-1830 historic structures in the

Midwest, according to Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Phil Porter.

The Island was also a national attraction in the 19th century, drawing people from across the country on railroads and steamers who sought relief from hey fever.

Federal and Victorian architecture is common on Mackinac, and several downtown buildings are included in Mackinac State Historic Parks' living museum program. The agency, overseen by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, prides itself on preserving its structures as historically accurate to the era when American soldiers occupied the fort.

The Island also continues to uphold an 1898 law that banned the horseless carriage from the Island because they spooked the horses. Except in winter, when snowmobiles are allowed, people today either walk, ride bicycles, or ride in carriages.

Ms. Sanford also noted that the Island's history is enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year.

"Its whole history is there and visible," she told the *Town Crier*. "It's a vibrant community. I had a great time just people watching before the meeting while I was there."

Island's Landmark Status on 'Watch'

Since 1935, the National Park Service has identified and recognized the nationally significant places that best represent America's history through its culture, buildings, and geography. Landmarks are chosen through a process that, according to its Web site, "is rigorous, consensus-based, and involves exhaustive research and extensive consultation with the public," and are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Interior as sites that are nationally significant to American history.

Only 3% of the listings on the National Register (sites worthy of preservation) are National Historic Landmarks and, on average, only about 20 new sites are granted National Historic Landmark status each year.

The National Park Service scrutinizes the landmark's maintenance of its historic theme on three levels, non-threatened,

watch, and emergency.

Mackinac Island is on "watch" status, where it has been for several years, said Ms. Sanford.

It is under watch because the community is blended with structures and areas that contribute and do not contribute to its landmark status, and with little or no guidelines in place for restoration or remodeling of historic structures, the status for "watch" landmarks could teeter either way.

Non-threatened status means the landmark has little to no depreciation of its historic value and has a guideline system in place to preserve its historic theme and structures, while emergency status is just the opposite, where a landmark is subject to losing its National Historic Landmark status owing to a decreased focus on its historical theme and decrease in the number of authentic structures.

"What Dena [Sanford] was explaining to us was that the Island is in watch status because we are 50-50 with contributing buildings and non-contributing buildings of our historic theme," said Mr. Neumann. "The Island might be quite unique in that it deals with both commercial and residential districts.

"Restoration or remodeling under historic preservation guidelines can be more expensive, but the other thing people must understand is their livelihood on the Island depends on visitors," he continued. "We've got to be careful not to depreciate that, and that's going to have to start with an educational process, helping people understand that protecting the Island's historic theme protects their livelihood."

Planning Commissioner Lee Finkel is in favor of protecting the Island's historic heritage, but

he wants to avoid setting standards for restoration and remodeling too high.

"If you set the bar too high, people won't do anything," said Mr. Finkel. "Proper preparation [for restoration] is considerably expensive, so we have to ask ourselves, is this more of a theoretical place to be or can we really get there?"

Mackinac Island may be unique in its variety of historic features and because the entire island is recognized, not just certain areas or structures. But the process for preserving its historic assets is the same for many National Historic Landmarks, said Ms. Sanford.

"Mackinac Island is like a lot of National Historic Landmark communities, where it is faced with a variety of desires with changing development," Mrs. Sanford said. "But basically, if the Island can ensure its theme will not change, and keep its historic structures in place, it would definitely help with its status."

What To Do Now

What kind of work Island planners have ahead of them depends on what part of history they want the Island to depict, said Ms. Sanford.

"They can divide the Island into sections, between geographical locations and types of buildings, for example," she suggested. "But they will need to form a research group with whatever scheme they come up with."

Mr. Finkel believes the committee should start simply.

"We're hoping to create a punch list and get a clear vision of where we want to be," he told the *Town Crier*.

Once the Island's busy summer season ends, an ad-hoc committee of city planners, historic architects, and possibly state park representatives will begin

discussion building and improvement guidelines for existing and new buildings, said Mr. Neumann.

"I hope we keep this momentum up and get a committee together to think through a series of steps to create these guidelines," he said. "The current ordinance is not adequate to protect the Island's historic presence, but it's better than five years ago, since we've added architectural review with incoming developments. Now we need to take another step and develop and design guidelines for historic preservation."

Fortunately, he said, there have been recent examples of building owners in the commercial district making the extra effort to preserve the Island's historic theme, including Grand Hotel's restoration of the second story balcony on the Windsor Hotel boarding house and the remodeling of the Mustang Lounge.

"To me, both owners made the correct approach," said Mr. Neumann.

Mustang Lounge, restored and expanded last winter, combined preservation of original timbers with the addition of new housing above the bar, but in such a way as to imply the apartments are behind the older building.

"They created the apartments to contrast the business purposefully so people would see the difference," Mr. Neumann explained.

New or remodeled buildings

Turn to page 25: Landmark

**Full Service
Bike Station
Rentals • Sales
Service**

847-8022

Open Daily 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Located at the End of the Marina



2008/2009

Mackinac Island Public School Board of Education Meetings

The regular Meetings of the Mackinac Island Board of education for the 2008/2009 school year will be held as follows:

Beginning at 7:00 PM:

Thursday, July 24, 2008

Thursday, August 21, 2008

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Beginning at 6:00 PM:

Thursday, October 23, 2008

Thursday, November 13, 2008

Thursday, December 11, 2008

Thursday, January 22, 2009

Thursday, February 19, 2009

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Thursday, April 23, 2009

Thursday, May 21, 2009

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Special Meetings can be set by Board motion, the Board President or any two Board Members. Special Board meetings must be posted.

The public is encouraged to attend all meetings.

All Meeting will be held at the Mackinac Island Public School unless otherwise posted.

**Terry Andress, Secretary
Mackinac Island Board of Education**

The Inn at Stonecliffe



Saddle & Sirloin Steakhouse

Experience Mackinac Island's newest dining experience. Offering you a taste of history in the Cudahy mansion that is The Inn at Stonecliffe.

Enjoy spectacular sunsets and panoramic views of the Straits of Mackinac and the Bridge. The Cudahy Room offers a martini menu and great wine list.

Come see what all the buzz is about!

Reservations suggested - 906.847.3355

www.theinnatstonecliffe.com

BOOKSIGNINGS

TUESDAY, AUG. 19

Judy Davids

3-4 p.m.

"Rock Star Mommy"



Kensington Press
\$12.95

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 20

James A. Mitchell

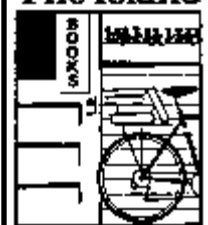
2-3 p.m.

"It Was All Right"



Wayne State University Press
\$24.95

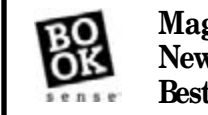
The Island



In the Lilac Tree Mall

847-6202
Mackinac Island

Bookstore



**Magazines
Newspapers
Bestsellers**

www.islandbookstore.com
info@islandbookstore.com