

Mackinac Island – Land of the Great Turtle

Historical excerpts from www.mackinacisland.org



On July 13 & 14, the MAB will be heading north to Mackinac Island to celebrate their 60th Anniversary. The unique island is an experience no Michigander should miss, and with the great rates available for MAB members at the Grand Hotel now is the time to visit. To whet your appetite for your island trip, we've put together a short history of the island. [Click here](#) for more information on making this your family's summer vacation!

According to Anishinaabe-Ojibwe tradition, Mackinac Island is a sacred place populated by the first people and was home to the Great Spirit Gitchie Manitou. Mackinac Island, by virtue of its location in the center of the Great Lakes waterway, became a tribal gathering place where offerings were made to Gitchie Manitou and where tribes buried their chiefs to honor the Great Spirit. Native Americans traveling the Straits region likened the shape of the island to that of a turtle's back and

named it Michilimackinac, Land of the Great Turtle.

Mackinac's location and rich fish population also drew French traders and Jesuit missionaries. In the 1670s, the first Europeans visited Mackinac. For 150 years, through French, British, and American settlements of Mackinac, the fur trade business was active on Mackinac. Europeans would ship canoe loads of their goods to Mackinac to trade for Indian-trapped beaver, muskrat, otter, and fox pelts.

After the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the British moved their settlement from what is now Mackinaw City to Mackinac Island and constructed Fort Mackinac (www.MackinacParks.com) in 1780. Chippewa chiefs sold Mackinac Island to the British on May 12, 1781.

The village of Mackinac was incorporated in 1817 and served as the seat for the territorial county of Michilimackinac. In the 1830s Mackinac's primary industry switched to fishing. Before competition increased in the area in the 1870s, Mackinac shipped as many as 20,000 barrels of fish a year.

After the Civil War, Mackinac quickly became a popular resort destination and Mackinac's business switched to tourism. Its healthy environment and beautiful scenery attracted visitors weary of war and eager for relaxing vacations. By 1875 Congress created Mackinac Island National Park, the country's second national. Military operations at the Fort had ceased and soldiers were removed from Fort Mackinac by 1895. Mackinac Island National Park became Michigan's first state park in 1895 when the park was transferred from the U.S. Government to the State of Michigan. Today, Mackinac Island State Park land covers more than 80 percent of the Island. By the end of the 20th century, tourism had replaced furs and fishing as the Island's only viable industry.

In the 1880s and 1890s Mackinac changed greatly. Business investment by large railroad companies and personal wealth led to the construction of opulent Victorian summer homes. Three transportation companies joined forces with hotelier John Oliver Plank and with Charles Caskey, a local cottage builder, and built the Grand Hotel in only 93 days! The hotel opened on July 10, 1887.

The 1920s led to regulations to restrict motor vehicles on Mackinac



Island, which remain in effect today. The Mackinac Island State Park Commission, the steward of the island's history and a natural resource, began its preservation efforts in the 1890s and continues today to preserve the island for all to enjoy.

The hotel has a rich history of entertaining Hollywood stars. In 1946 "This Time For Keeps" starring Jimmy Durante and Esther Williams was filmed at Grand Hotel. Perhaps the most famous movie filmed at the hotel is "Somewhere In Time" starring Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour. Released in 1980, it still remains an icon of the island and its historic charm.



In 2009 The Grand Hotel was certified as a Green Lodging Michigan Leader by the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth. The commitment to reducing Grand Hotel's carbon footprint is an ongoing process.

When you step off the Island Ferry Dock, you will be in a living Victorian village. Enjoy the downtown hustle and bustle of the early 1800s but don't miss the beauty of the Island's interior and peaceful lakefront perimeter path. Once you've visited this beautiful Island, you will find that it is your Island, too. We look forward to seeing you in July!