

SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY

5656 W. Jagger Rd.
Ludington, Michigan 49431

July 1, 1989

From the President, Glen Furst:

Dear Friends:

During the last fifteen years I have returned to South Manitou Island one or two times a year. From the beginning I was amazed in the changes that had taken place since I had lived there. The Island was now part of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior). Operators of the Manitou Island Transit (Ferry boat Service) stated that more than 5000 people were visiting the Island each year. This number did not include those people who came in their own boat. Basically, all were interested in Island history. It dawned on me that many of my relatives (through marriage or otherwise) had been a part of that history, just as many of you who read this will come to the same realization.

I became concerned about the deplorable condition of the cemetery and the grave sites located on the farm lands. I realized that in a few years no one would be alive that could point out where these sites were and had some knowledge of who was buried there. I decided to locate and permanently mark each one.

The decision to become active was easy; progress was slow. My biggest disappointment was that the cemetery chart could not be located. Louis Hutzler was the last known sexton of the cemetery but had moved from the Island years ago. It is now believed that he left the chart with the Township Supervisor, and the chart burned in a house fire.

The cemetery had to be cleaned up. Trees 6" in diameter, juniper bushes, and Sumac 6' - 8' in height were growing everywhere. With a bulldozer, and a chainsaw, a 7 person work party, consisting of the Taylor family, Leslie Furst, N.P.S. Ranger, Pete LaValley, George Hutzler and myself, worked for a period of three days. Later, Fred Burdick organized a Youth Conservation Corps (Y.C.C.) group, sponsored by the N.P.S., to fill in sunken graves and make other improvements. The one acre plot once again looked like a cemetery.

It was now apparent that many of the grave sites were unmarked, and only one site in the farm land had a headstone. At the mere mention of this fact relatives were very receptive to the idea of preservation, improvement and on going care of these grave sites. As a result, in the next few years, five (5) headstones and seventeen (17) white cement crosses, two feet high, have been placed on Island grave sites. All expenses incurred for these improvements have been taken care of through donations.

It was determined, by obtaining a copy of the document as recorded by the Register of Deeds, on the 30th of June, 1909, that one acre of land was purchased by the people of South Manitou Island. This land was purchased for the purpose of establishing a cemetery. The cemetery was to be used by the people of South Manitou Island, and their heirs.

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Due to the existence of this document, the National Park Service did not purchase the cemetery and has a limited responsibility to provide material and labor to maintain these grounds.

It is planned to have a cement base for each cross so it will always stand erect in a vertical position. Many of the crosses have names embedded in the cement; others do not. If additional data is obtained, it will be etched into the cement base before it becomes hard.

A search of the U.S. Census records and County Seat books is being conducted as time presents an occasion to do so; however, research is slow, time consuming, and only little progress has been made..

We can be sure that several crosses will stand silently erect, with no data on them except for the word "unknown" embedded in the base. Perhaps these crosses will serve as a reminder to many of us, as we pass by, to listen more intently when our elders interrupt our conversation with the age old adage "I remember when...".

Glen

From the Clerk/Treasurer, Johanna DeKok:

The Memorial Society, for the purpose of on going care and improvement of South Manitou Island's gravesites and cemetery, has become a reality, thanks to the dogged determination of our president, Glen Furst.

However, the name of the organization, as agreed upon at the annual meeting of July 1988 (South Manitou Cemetery Assn. Inc.) has been changed to: SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY.

Official cemetery records have been lost, and the word "cemetery" cannot be legally included in the organization's name.

Upon the recommendation of a lawyer retained by Glen Furst, and in order to speed up the legal process in establishing the organization, the Board of Trustees agreed upon the new name.

The organization, under its new name, has been established as a non-profit organization with the State of Michigan. Glenn Furst has obtained an IRS identification number, and the Board has opened a savings and checking account with Empire National Bank of Traverse City, Michigan.

By laws have been written. Some copies will be available for review at the next annual meeting to be held JULY 29, 1989, immediately following the picnic at EMPIRE TOWNSHIP HALL, EMPIRE, MICHIGAN.

Additional copies can be obtained; from the Clerk, at the annual meeting or by writing to JOHANNA DEKOK, 4838 BROOKS ST., LELAND, MICHIGAN 49654. Cost \$2.00.

At this time, no funds are available for printing and mailing. Monies collected will be used to defray the cost.

Adoption of these by laws will take place on or before the annual meeting of July 1990, in a manner as outlined in stated by laws, by voting MEMBERS of the Society.

A MEMBER is considered anyone who has legal right to burial in the cemetery on South Manitou Island, and anyone who has made a donation to the Memorial Society.

Donations, bequests, etc. will be deposited in the name of the Society into bank accounts (C.D.'s, Trusts, checking, as determined by the Board of Trustees, see by laws); and the interest will be used for the care of the gravesites and operating expenses of the Society.

The Board of Trustees has done its part to establish the Memorial Society; however, its success will depend on the Society's members and their donations. We all receive pleas for donations for charitable causes, many obscure and in far away places. South Manitou Island, too, is a far away place; but how near and dear it is to all of us.

The people who are buried on the Island have a story to tell, a story which must be preserved and retold. Some have toiled the Island's soil; other Islander's have lost their lives in the line of duty; some have otherwise contributed to the history of South Manitou Island. All deserve to be remembered, and they deserve to have their graves cared for.

Please do not disappoint us.

Johanna

NORTH AND SOUTH MANITOU ISLAND -- P I C N I C

Saturday, July 29, 1989 - NOON
Empire Township Hall, 10088 Front St., Empire, MI.

BRING A DISH TO PASS

"SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY" - ANNUAL MEETING

Immediately following picnic - Approx. 1:30 P.M.

MEMBERSHIP - SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY

5656 Jagger Rd.
Ludington, Michigan 49431

DATE:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY, STATE:

ZIP:

TELEPHONE:

DONATIONS:

--- \$100.00 --- \$50.00 ---\$25.00
--- \$10.00 --- OTHER

OPTIONAL: Relationship to South Manitou Island: