Manitou Islands Memorial Society

V16 No 3 | Newsletter | Fall/Winter/2005

2005 Season In Review

This season marked our 35th year as an annual reunion of former residents and our 17th year as a formally chartered nonprofit organization.

The reunion is as old as the Literature itself. The whole idea in the beginning was to bring former residents together once a year for a reunion picnic, to renew old friendships and keep in touch with the Island community as everyone was scattered in some way.

Seventeen years went by, during which the Literature brought us news of the property on the islands. In 1988 the Society incorporated South Manitou was officially sold and owned by Glen Arbor Township. Over the years, the picnic took place, and the years had taken their toll. The fence was down, and nature was encroaching, with pompies, sumacs and young trees overtaking the cemetery. In 1989 a small reunion group decided to take on the project of restoring and caring for the cemetery where so many of their relatives lay buried. The Manitou Islands Memorial Society, or the Literature, which these took title to the property. In 1990 we voted to organize more formally as a nonprofit "South Manitou Cemetery Association".

Born about the same time as the National Lakeshore, many of the Islanders had sold their property to the park service. The acquisition of property that had been held in some families through many generations was a traumatic experience, and there is no secret that an element of bitterness still exists between the park service and some Islanders.

But time heals all wounds, and over the intervening years attitudes adjusted, on both sides. We've grown in numbers, and the Society has evolved from a group of "Old Islanders and Memorial Society", then to the "Manitou Islands Memorial Society." We've now been described as a special "friends of the park" group, and we've been called the "Island Family" or the "Islands Club." Meanwhile, the National Park Service in general, and the Lakeshore in particular, has developed a very positive relationship with the Islanders, and the success of this reunion is a testament to what can be accomplished when everyone's hearts are in the right place.

In celebration of that spirit, here's a summary of this year's activities and accomplishments.

Cemetery Maintenance Projects

Ever true to our original founders' agenda, MIMS volunteers completed several cemetery-related projects. Two new crosses were erected on unmarked graves in North Manitou's cemetery. Several trees were removed, and the overgrowth on the main cemetery on South Manitou was cleared away to open up the area together. "Unknown" graves near its main entrance (see photo on page 1).

Photo: Bob & Susie Fraser

The little cemetery near South Manitou's old dock was also spruced up, and MIMS volunteers helped install new stones, including one for Captain Joseph Nelson, for whom the dock leases surrounding cemetery are named.

Hans Shanty Restoration

The picturesque, but dilapidated, structure behind the Harbor Hunt house (Jenks/Hughes cottage), has been completely restored. The original purpose of the little building, which appeared to be two separate shanties that were merged at some time or another, remains a mystery.

Photos: Bob & Susie Fraser

Material for this project was provided from one of the Lakeshore's CCC Historic Preservation Training Projects.

and Barbara Seipler, Laura Quackenbush, and members of the Leelanau Historical Society, were on hand to scan those items and convert them to digital files. Some may be featured in one of Barbara's new books on Victor Center.

Notable at this year's reunion was the presence of all ages, sometimes representing three and four generations of the same family. Every sixth person at the Empire reunion was a child or teenager, and the number of youthful participants on South Manitou was also high. Many of these young people had been a special concern to us, and their presence was especially welcome and wholly fundamental to this occasion and donated by Lora Kobelkowski, registrar, was of the Fayette Historical.

The annual South Manitou Island Excursion drew a record-breaking crowd of 150 people, and 120 reservations were booked for the ride. This year's crossing was the roughest ever! There

Photo: Rod Beckstrom

Port Oneida Fair

In our second year of operation of our exhibit, "Old Time Pioneers" was a big hit for both young and old. The simple barnyard theme of the exhibit seemed especially intriguing to "boys" of all ages, and, generally, who evidently expect challenges to come in much more "hi-tech" packages. Lynn Roe offered draft-horse demonstrations, and a crowd featuring the classic *Raggedy Ann and Andy*, which proved

Photo: Bob & Susie Fraser

Name the Newsletter

The newsletter has never had a name other than "Newsletter". The first issue was published over 16 years ago, on July 5, 1989. Ruth Nelson, Ruth Hall, Jeanne Olson, Jean Hall and Fern Jellerson of another Jean Nelson (Ruth's niece, who was our first President, talked about having spent the previous fifteen years doing what she could to preserve island heritage, then finally tackling the island's main cemetery.

Ruth Nelson was also the first publication chairperson, *Jeanne Nelson, and Jeanne P. H. brought their experience to bear on the publication of the Society's newsletter. Ruth, Jean, Jeanne and Fern are the Society's Charter Members.*

Johanna, who was the Secretary/Treasurer, wrote about the Literature, the Society's history, the Society's corporation, and its potential for the future:

The people who are buried on the Island have a story to tell, a story that is part of the history of the Great Lakes region. Many of the graves are those of children who died of diseases that are rare today. Some references contributed to the history of South Manitou Island. The Society's purpose is to preserve the history of the Island and its cemetery.

The second issue, which appeared three and a half months later, on October 15, 1989, was the first to be called a newsletter. It was also the first to be published on a regular schedule, and was designed several for our fourteen years, until March 2004, when the South Manitou Memorial Society became the Manitou Islands Memorial Society.

Ruth Nelson suggested the publication the "Newsletter". That's what it has been called since. It is time for some imagination! Here are some examples from other area nonprofits:

"The Clapboard" from Preserve Harbor Society in Traverse, "The Clapboard" from Preserve Harbor Society in Traverse, "Drifting Sands" from the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, and "View from the Dunes" from the Leelanau Conservancy.

Use the enclosed envelope to submit your ideas. The list of suggestions will be reviewed by the Board of Directors, and simultaneously will be submitted to the membership. The winner will be chosen by online vote, and announced in the next issue of the newsletter, which will be published after the new season.

If your is the winner, you'll be awarded a handsome plaque at the next annual meeting. Your name will also be added to the twisted to come along to South Manitou Island the following day, complimentary of the Memorial Society. :)

Boxed Members Visit "the Crib"

The Manitou Islands Memorial Society is studying the feasibility of signing a historic preservation lease with the Coast Guard and USS, as the Manitou Island Transit Authority has done with the Manitou Passage. The Submarine, built in the 1930's, is the largest surviving example of the type. It was decommissioned in 1946, and was donated to Chicago by Lt. Commander Edward Ralph Stephan, who was born and raised in Glen Arbor. Stephan was also responsible for the Chicago Submarine Memorial, which honors the men who served on the Silversides during World War II.

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Photo: Bob & Susie Fraser

Scott Kelly, Director of the Chicago Submarine Memorial, and