

DRAFT

**PRELIMINARY HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT
EAST END/MISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT
CITY OF MACKINAC ISLAND, MICHIGAN
August 19, 2023**

CHARGE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

On August 3, 2022, the Mackinac Island City Council appointed a committee to study a proposed East End/Mission Historic District. The study area is defined as follows:

On the west, the proposed boundary is the westernmost boundary of the property immediately adjacent to and east of the Island House Hotel property (which is on state-leased land), then proceeding south across Main Street and along the eastern boundary of the state-owned marina property to the water of Haldimand Bay, then proceeding east along the water's edge of Haldimand Bay including docks south of Main Street (M-185/Lakeshore/Huron Street) extending into the bay, to the westernmost boundary of state-owned land located along the water's edge, then continuing northerly along the western boundary of state-owned land and crossing Main Street to follow the western boundary of non-Mission Point owned land just west of Franks Street, north to Wendall Street, then proceeding west along the south side of Wendall Street, then north along the west side of Truscott Street, then proceeding west along the south side of Truscott Street, then west along the south side of Huron Road until Huron Road intersects with state-owned land, then proceeding west along the southern boundary of state-owned land to the point of beginning at the eastern boundary of the property where the Island House Hotel is located (excluding from the above description any state-owned property and the property commonly known as the "Beaver Dock" owned by D and S North Real Estate, LLC). Properties included in the proposed district would include those on both sides of a portion of Main Street, Bogan Lane, Church Street, a portion of Truscott Street, McGulpin Street, Mission Street, Ferry Lane, those properties on the west side of Franks Street, the south side of Wendell Street, a portion of the west and south sides of Truscott Street, and a portion of the south side of Huron Road, as well as properties on both sides of alleys or court streets that are encompassed within these boundaries.

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sam Barnwell, resident of an existing historic district, and part of management company as Chief Development Officer for properties within the proposed historic district

Brad Chambers, long time property owner and resident of Mackinac Island

Mary Dufina, year-round resident and business owner for 50 plus years, currently serving Planning Commission, Historic District Study Committee and owner of a historic home in West End Historic District.

Brian Findley, former hotel executive and current owner and manager of a Bed and Breakfast on Mackinac Island, deep roots in Mackinac Island since childhood, involved in the arts on the island

Nancy May, third generation, life-long resident of Mackinac Island and lives and owns property in the proposed district

Consultants to the Committee - Past Perfect, Inc.

Jennifer Metz, Principal (36 CFR 61, Architectural History)

Rebecca Smith-Hoffman, Principal (36 CFR 61, History)

INVENTORY

A photographic inventory of the proposed district was conducted between May and August 2022 for the City of Mackinac Island Building Inventory and Reconnaissance Historic Resource Inventory. Additional photographs were taken in the spring of 2023.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The proposed East End/Mission Historic District, as described above, is located at the eastern end of Mackinac Island, is bordered at the north by the East Bluff, at the west by State Park-owned land, at the east by the Mission Point Resort, and at the south by Lake Huron. The streets in the district generally form a grid. Main Street is the major east-west artery, with five north-south side streets – Bogan Lane, Church, Truscott, Mission and Franklin Streets. McGulpin, Wendall, and Ferry Streets are short east-west streets north of Main Street, with Lesley Court curving between Main and Truscott Streets at the south.

The proposed district is a largely intact, cohesive neighborhood and the buildings as a group reflect various periods of development of historic Mackinac Island. The majority date from the nineteenth century and relate to the eras of resort and early National Park tourism. Those buildings constructed after the period of significance generally fit the scale of the historic structures around them and do not substantially detract from the historic character of the area.

The district contains eighty-four structures representing a variety of uses – hotels, bed and breakfast inns, apartment and condominium buildings, private residences, and three churches. Barns and other out buildings, though few in number, are a distinctive part of the landscape. Important natural features of the district are its extensive canopy of mature trees, the ubiquitous

lilac bushes that are distinctive to the island, colorfully landscaped gardens, and the impressive view scape looking toward Haldimand Bay of Lake Huron.

Although a majority of the historic structures in the district date from the early nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, there is evidence of eighteenth-century development. The William McGulpin House, built in 1790-91 and now located on Fort and Market Streets, was moved from McGulpin Street in 1982. A sided log house at 6768 McGulpin Street, known as the McGulpin Family House, likely dates from the late eighteenth century as well.

There are seven small to medium-sized hotels and bed and breakfast inns: Bay View Bed and Breakfast (6947 Main Street), Inn on Mackinac (6896 Main Street), Harbour View Inn (6860 Main Street), Haan's 1830 Inn (6806 Main Street), the Jacob Wendell House Bed & Breakfast (6734 Main Street), Bogan Lane Inn (1420 Bogan Lane), and the Pine Cottage Bed & Breakfast (1427 Bogan Lane).

There are three small businesses: Mackinac Wheels (6929 Main Street), a bicycle rental and repair shop; Fleurish & Bloom, (6673 Main Street), a flower shop; and the Butterfly House and Insect World (6750 McGulpin Street).

Three of the island's five churches are located in the district: The Mission Church (6670 Main Street), Ste. Anne Roman Catholic Church (6836 Main Street), and Mackinac Island Bible Church (6688 Main Street), which is located in a house converted for use as a church.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The dominant historic styles of architecture of the district relate to the era of the National Park (1875-1895) and resort and early tourism from about 1840 to the halt of construction nationwide in 1941, the year the United States entered into World War II. The majority of the nineteenth century buildings are of frame construction, with gable roofs and front porches.

Facing Main Street, the district's largest and most high-style structures are private residences and tourist hotels, a number of which originally were larger private houses that have been expanded to accommodate a changed use. The houses on the side streets, which are generally smaller and simpler in design, are a mixture of private residences and bed and breakfast inns, particularly on Bogan Lane. Examples of architectural styles popular in the United States from the early nineteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century can be found in the district – Colonial, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival, as well as vernacular interpretations of these styles. The predominant vernacular house types dating from the 1840s are front-gabled, gable and wing, side-gabled, and cross-gabled, almost always with a front porch (sometimes enclosed). Occasionally there is simple Queen Anne or Italianate detailing, but most often decorative detail is minimal.

Mission Church (6670 Main Street), completed in 1829, reflects the Colonial style common to New England churches at that time, a heritage brought to Mackinac Island by the Reverend

William Ferry, a Presbyterian minister. Ferry and his wife, Amanda, came to the island from Massachusetts as missionaries with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission in 1823 to establish a school for indigenous children from around the Great Lakes. Ferry's work inspired the founding of a congregation and subsequently the construction of the Mission Church. The restoration of Mission Church in the late 1890s was Mackinac Island's first historic restoration project.

The Lafayette Davis House, now Haan's 1830 Inn (6806 Main Street) and the Jacob Wendell House (6734 Main Street) are fine examples of the Greek Revival style, which was so popular between 1840 and 1860 that it was often known as the "National" style. Another interpretation of the style is the house at 6784 Main Street.

The tower and soaring spire of Ste. Anne Roman Catholic Church (6836 Main Street) provides a distinct visual landmark in the district. The Gothic Revival detailing of this building – its steeply pitched roof, the tall, narrow stained-glass windows, delicate turrets at each corner, and the massive pedimented entry – emphasize the verticality of the Gothic Revival style typical to churches of this period.

Although there are no high-style Italianate Revival buildings in the district, a few vernacular houses have features associated with the style. Thuya Cottage (6948 Main Street) is a vernacular house that has simple Italianate features – overhanging eaves with brackets, window hoods with decorative detailing, and segmental-arch windows at the bay. Another vernacular example is the house at 1412 Church Street, which has changed over time, yet retains the simple Italianate detail of hipped roof with overhanging bracketed eaves.

The Queen Anne style, which came into vogue in the United States in the 1880s, is widely represented in the district, for example: Bay View Bed & Breakfast (6947 Main Street), Bonnie Doone Cottage (6883 Main Street), the Bennett Hotel (6781 Main Street), the Inn on Mackinac (6896 Main Street), LaChance Cottage, now part of Harbour View Inn (6860 Main Street), residence (6823 Main Street), as well as the vernacular examples having round porch columns (1420 Bogan Lane), and wrap-around porch (1427 Bogan Lane),

The Madame LaFramboise House (6860 Main Street), with its two-story Colonial Revival portico added in the 1890s, is an example of the type of changes that have been made to a number of the buildings in the district over time. Ste. Anne Rectory (6837 Main Street) is a smaller example of the Colonial Revival style.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and gas rationing during World War II were not conducive to tourism and devastated the island economy. The hotels, cottages, and most island businesses were closed and there was essentially no construction during this period.

There are examples of mid-20th century architecture built after WWII consisting of three ranch houses, two one-story utility-style buildings along the lakeshore (one is now a one-story café and a one-story utility ferry storage building), a former public bathroom (now converted to the bicycle shop) and the four condominium housing buildings along Lesley Court associated with Mackinac Island College. Lesley Court, multi family buildings, was originally used as facility housing for Mackinac College (now Mission Point Hotel). Any historic contribution Lesley

Court may provide should be determined in conjunction with a historic study, if it should occur, involving the Mission Point Resort (formerly Moral Re-Armament and/or Mackinac College.) There are the nine Victorian Revival multiunit apartment/condominiums buildings constructed in the 1960s to the 2000s. One large historic building converted to a condominium building has been so substantially altered that is considered non-contributing (Mapleview 6661 Main Street.)

While the historic buildings in the proposed district have sustained changes over time, some more than others, the majority of the structures retain a relatively high degree of architectural integrity, contributing to the historic sense of place that permeates the island. The post WWII era built structures are generally in keeping with the scale, massing, and fenestration detail of their historic neighbors and do not negatively impact those structures.

The proposed district as a whole maintains the seven aspects of integrity: design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling.

There are vacant lots in the district and are indicated on the map as such. While the vacant lots have not been identified in this report as being a historically contributing care should be taken with their development as many were likely previously used by settlers for open lawn, natural landscape, or at the water's edge had small commercial fishing structures located on them, all of a smaller scale and not obstructing the views of the water. Development of these open spaces, many previously a part of land with a contributing structure, needs to develop in a manner that is compatible with that structure and the surrounding district.

RESOURCE LIST - PLEASE SEE SPREADSHEET ATTACHED

Please note that Main Street is also referred to as Huron Street, Lakeshore Drive, and M-185. For the purposes of this report Main Street is used.

COUNT AND PERCENTAGE OF HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES

Total Resources - 86

Contributing - 47– Contributing resources account for 55% of the total

Non-Contributing – 39 – 45% of the total

Please note: the inventory counts single building apartment/condo/rowhouse buildings as one resource (so multiunit buildings are counted as one count per separate building footprint); properties with multiple buildings on one parcel under the same ownership are counted as one resource (ex a barn or shed is included with the house it is associated with), but even though counted as one resource in the count, there may have multiple contributing structures or elements on that property.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

On the west, the proposed boundary should be the westernmost boundary of the property immediately adjacent to and east of the Island House Hotel property, then proceeding south

across Main Street and along the eastern boundary of the state-owned marina property to the water of Haldimand Bay, then proceeding east along the water's edge of Haldimand Bay including docks south of Main Street (M-185/Lakeshore/Huron Street) extending into the Bay, to the westernmost boundary of state-owned land located along the water's edge, then continuing northerly along the western boundary of state-owned land and crossing Main Street to follow the western boundary of Franks Street, north to Wendall Street, then proceeding west along the south side of Wendall Street, then north along the west side of Truscott Street, then proceeding west along the south side of Truscott Street, then west along the south side of Huron Road until Huron Road intersects with state-owned land, then proceeding west along the southern boundary of state-owned land to the point of beginning at the eastern boundary of the property where the Island House Hotel is located (excluding from the above description any state-owned property and the property commonly known as the "Beaver Dock" owned by D and S North Real Estate, LLC). Properties included in the proposed district would include those on both sides of a portion of Main Street, Bogan Lane, Church Street, a portion of Truscott Street, McGulpin Street, Mission Street, Ferry Lane, those properties on the west side of Franks Street, the south side of Wendall Street, a portion of the west and south sides of Truscott Street, and a portion of the south side of Huron Road, as well as properties on both sides of alleys or court streets that are encompassed within these boundaries.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is the area of the island to the east of downtown beginning after the Mackinac State Historic Parks-owned leased land, south to the water, and east to the large-scale Mission Point Resort, and north to state-owned leased land. The proposed district began to develop in the late eighteenth century and continued to grow as the village spread beyond its original boundaries. The district contains eighty-two (82) structures representing a variety of uses – hotels, bed and breakfast inns, apartment and condominium buildings, private residences, three churches, and three small commercial structures. To the north of the district is state land and the east bluff cottages, to the south is the lakeshore, which is an inseparable part of the district as it was always related to its use for fishing, tourism, and recreation, and therefore the boundary extends to the water's edge. To the west is the Mackinac State Historic Parks leased-property of the Island House Hotel and to the east the property of Mission Point Resort, as the larger hotel complexes (such as Mission Point Resort, the Grand Hotel, and Stonecliff Hotel) are potential historic districts by their own right.

HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

Major sources and direct portions for the history include sections from the previous reports on the islands historic contexts taken from the National Historic Landmark update of 1999 (Jane Busch) and the Market and Main (Huron) Historic District Study Report (Jane Busch, Past Perfect, 2011), as well as the Mackinac Island Historic Context Report (Eric Gollanek, Past Perfect, 2011). Please see the bibliography for details.

Before the first Europeans saw Mackinac Island, it was an important gathering place for the Native Americans who came there to fish and imbued the island's limestone formations and cliffs with sacred significance. Historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the island's

inhabitants have always clustered near Haldimand Bay. In the late seventeenth century, French fur traders and Jesuit missionaries came to the Straits of Mackinac because of its strategic location and because it was already an Indian gathering place. Father Jacques Marquette and a band of refugee Huron established the first mission on Mackinac Island in 1671. Because the soil was unsuitable for their crops, within the year the mission was moved to the north shore of the straits at Fort DuBuade (later known as St. Ignace). By the 1680s, St. Ignace was a center of activity for the Jesuits, fur traders, and French soldiers who built Fort DuBuade. The fur traders established a trading pattern that made the Straits of Mackinac the heart of the upper Great Lakes fur trade for 150 years. In 1697 the French government abandoned Fort DuBuade in response to a glut in the European fur market. When French soldiers returned to the straits in 1714, the Jesuits and their followers had moved to the south shore of the straits, and there the soldiers built Fort Michilimackinac. In 1761 the British took command of Fort Michilimackinac as a result of the Seven Years War.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, British officials became concerned that the accessible, wood palisade Fort Michilimackinac would not withstand an American attack. In October 1779, the new commander of Michilimackinac, Lieutenant Governor Patrick Sinclair, developed plans to move the fort to Mackinac Island and began negotiations to purchase the island from the Ojibwa and the move began in the winter of 1779–80. As the location for the fort, Sinclair chose the 150-foot bluff overlooking the harbor and south shore, where he located the village. Sinclair knew this left the fort vulnerable to attack from the higher bluff to the north, but it allowed him to protect the village and harbor. The location of the village outside the fort walls, a departure from the situation at Michilimackinac, was intended to enhance military security. Nevertheless, the village had wooden palisade walls of its own on the south, north, and west sides; the bay was on the east. To entice the villagers to move to the island, Sinclair ordered Ste. Anne Catholic Church to be shipped over the ice by oxen-drawn sleds. The church was located at what is now the corner of Market and Hoban streets (it was later relocated farther west on Haldimand Bay). Other buildings were moved across the ice as well; the William McGulpin House (1575 Fort Street) may have been one of them. Although the British were in command, the civilian population in the village consisted predominantly of French fur traders, their Odawa and Ojibwa wives, and their Métis (mixed-blood) offspring.

Although the 1783 Treaty of Paris placed Mackinac Island under the ownership of the United States, American soldiers did not occupy Fort Mackinac until 1796. During this time the population of Mackinac Island grew, expanding beyond the palisade walls of the original village. Reports of the number of buildings in the village between 1796 and 1802 are erratic, ranging from about fifty to eighty-nine. In the winter only about half of the houses were occupied, but the summer population of a thousand or more filled all of the houses and spilled over into teepees. Even after 1796, British merchants continued to control the fur trade, while French and Métis traders conducted most of the actual trading.

Not surprisingly, the early architecture of the village was French colonial in form and construction. Seven of these French colonial log buildings survive on the island today. In 1811, John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company merged with the Montreal Michilimackinac Company, making Astor the first American with a share of the Great Lakes fur trade. Then in July 1812, in the first land action of the War of 1812, the British captured Fort Mackinac. As the

westernmost of a line of forts on the border between the United States and Canada, the northernmost fort on the western frontier, and the grand depot for the fur trade, Fort Mackinac was a key defensive post. In December 1814 the Treaty of Ghent ended the war, returning Fort Mackinac to the Americans, who reoccupied the fort in July 1815.

After the war, Astor reestablished Mackinac Island as the American Fur Company's center for interior operations and quickly came to dominate the flourishing fur trade. The scale and complexity of Astor's trading empire was unprecedented. Ramsey Crooks, Astor's partner and general manager, and Robert Stuart, resident manager, supervised the American Fur Company's Mackinac Island operation. Stuart's Federal-style house (7342 Market Street) functioned as the company's administrative headquarters and was an important venue in the social life of Mackinac Island's upper class. Some independent traders—including Michael Dousman and partners Edward Biddle and John Drew—had headquarters on Mackinac Island as well. The trading pattern was much the same as in the late seventeenth century. During the winter, French Canadian and Métis traders spread through the Great Lakes region trading for furs with Indian trappers. In the summer, traders returned with their pelts to the American Fur Company warehouse (7358 Market Street) on Mackinac Island, where company clerks counted, sorted, graded, and packed the pelts to ship back to New York City. The traders obtained a new supply of trade goods for the next winter's trading. During this summer rendezvous, the island's permanent population of about five hundred grew to about two thousand with visiting traders and trappers as well as Native Americans from many nations who came to do business with the United States Indian Agent.¹

In the 1830s the decline of the fur trade ushered in a time of change for Mackinac Island. In 1834 Astor sold the American Fur Company to a group of investors led by Ramsey Crooks, who moved the company's inland headquarters west to LaPointe, Wisconsin, reducing though not eliminating, Mackinac's role in the fur trade. Crooks was successful at first, but in 1842 a combination of factors led him to declare bankruptcy. During this time, commercial fishing emerged as the island's primary industry. The 1825 opening of the Erie Canal and the introduction of steamboats on the Great Lakes made travel to the region faster and easier, fostering permanent settlement in the region. Mackinac Island became a fish processing and shipping center for the northern Lake Michigan and Lake Huron region. Schooners and steamers transported the fish to markets in the region's growing villages and cities. Although the island never had the prominence in fishing that it had in the fur trade, the fishing industry provided a strong economic basis for Mackinac until at least the Civil War. A dozen or more new docks were built in the 1840s and 1850s. Leading fish merchants included Michael Dousman, Biddle and Drew, William Scott, Toll and Rice, Bromilow and Bates, and James Bennett. The Bromilow & Bates building (7330 Huron Street) is one of few tangible remnants of the industry. Barrel-making and repair became an important subsidiary industry; more than thirty coopers—many of them from Scotland, Ireland, and Canada—worked on the island in 1850.² Among them was the Doud family of coopers from Ireland. The fishermen themselves were mostly Native American and Métis.

¹ Porter, Phil, *Mackinac: An Island Famous in These Regions*, Mackinac Island: Mackinac State Historic Park Commission, 1998, pg. 27.

² Porter, *Mackinac: An Island Famous in These Regions*, pg. 35.

Furs and fish were not the only goods shipped through the Straits of Mackinac. It was the primary Great Lakes shipping lane until the development of railroads across Ohio and the water route was the only way for people and goods to get to the growing upper Midwest. Mackinac Island was the key stopping point and freight of all kinds was transshipped from the port on Haldimand Bay. As steamboats became more common, Mackinac functioned as a fueling station, selling wood at first and later coal. As commerce and industry expanded, it remained concentrated in the original village.

Another boost to the island's economy came from the 1836 Treaty of Washington. Under the terms of this treaty, Ojibwa and Odawa Indians sold fifteen million acres of land in Michigan to the United State government in exchange for money, goods, and provisions to be paid over the next twenty years. The American Fur Company and other island merchants successfully convinced the government to make these distributions on Mackinac Island. Thus each year in late summer approximately four thousand Ojibwa and Odawa came to Mackinac Island to receive their annuities in cash, goods, and provisions. The construction of the county courthouse on Market Street in 1839 testifies to Mackinac Island's continuing importance as the county seat for all of the Upper Peninsula and the northern part of the Lower Peninsula.

The arrival of Mackinac Island's first tourists in the 1830s contributed to the diversification of the island's economy. Travelers were beginning to seek resorts that offered scenic beauty, not just healthy water and air as was the custom earlier. The Romantic Movement introduced a new appreciation for the beauty of nature and wilderness landscapes, bringing tourists to places like Niagara Falls and the Catskill Mountains. Mackinac Island combined the health advantages of the lakeshore with the rugged beauty of the wilderness. A number of writers visited the island in the 1830s and 1840s, including Harriet Martineau, Alexis DeTocqueville, Anna Jameson, Margaret Fuller, and William Cullen Bryant. Their published descriptions of Mackinac Island helped to popularize the island as a tourist destination. The steamboats that were being used to transport fish and furs made it easier for visitors to come to Mackinac Island, although it was still a journey, and island businesses were just beginning to cater to the tourist trade. In 1837 the Protestant Mission House (just outside the Mission District) was converted into the island's first hotel; the Island House (adjacent to the Mission District at the west) was built in 1852; and the Lake View House (downtown) opened in 1858. A horse-drawn omnibus offered tours of natural and historic sites as early as the 1840s, and shops in town began carrying "Indian curiosities" such as baskets, corn husk dolls, woven mats, and birch bark containers of maple sugar. The Mission District saw housing and rooming house development increase during this era.

By 1850 Mackinac Island's permanent population had grown to 956. Immigrants came from New England and New York. Twelve African-Americans (some formerly enslaved) came from Kentucky and Virginia. A growing number of islanders were foreign-born, coming from England, Scotland, Canada, Belgium, Prussia, Germany, and Holland. The largest group of immigrants came from Ireland—pushed by the potato famine that brought more than one million Irish to America and pulled by the opportunities in the island's fishing industry. By 1850 the Irish constituted almost 20 percent of the island's population.³

³ Porter, *Mackinac: An Island Famous in These Regions*, pg. 41.

After the Civil War, Mackinac Island quickly rose to prominence as one of the most popular resorts in the Midwest. Improved transportation was the key to bringing more visitors to the island. In 1875 the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad completed a railroad line to Petoskey, where travelers could board a steamer to Mackinac Island. In 1882 both the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad and the Michigan Central Railroad completed railroad lines to Mackinaw City, where ferry boats were available to complete the short trip to the island. In the same year, the Detroit and Cleveland Steam Navigation Company began regular service to Mackinac Island. Vacationers in this era continued to seek a healthy and inspiring environment, but there was an increasing emphasis on recreation. Scenic views and limestone formations, historic sites from the War of 1812, the harbor that still sheltered sailboats and Indian canoes, the quaint old French houses in the village, and Fort Mackinac itself all offered diversions for tourists. In his 1875 guide book to Mackinac Island, John Disturnell described the village as “a perfect curiosity.” Disturnell recounted many of the island’s Indian legends, an important part of Mackinac’s attraction. In the guidebook’s business directory, four stores list Indian curiosities along with their dry goods, groceries, and provisions.⁴ There was a growing compliment of boarding houses and hotels to accommodate the increased tourism at this time as well.

The island’s importance as a resort was solidified with the establishment of America’s second national park on Mackinac Island in 1875. The national park, which encompassed about 50 percent of the island, gave new purpose to Fort Mackinac, which had long ceased to have strategic importance as a frontier or border post. Now the fort commandant served as the park superintendent, responsible for enforcing rules and regulations, building roads and trails, collecting and disbursing park funds, and leasing lots for cottages. On the west side of the island, Hubbard’s Annex was platted in 1882 as Mackinac Island’s first cottage resort community, followed by the first cottages on the East and West Bluffs. The increased services required by visitors and wealthy cottagers alike aided the growth of the island’s overall economy. When a partnership of railroad and steamship lines built the Grand Hotel in 1887, Mackinac Island entered the category of fashionable resort where Newport, Rhode Island, and Saratoga Springs, New York, set the standard. The wealthy elite of Chicago, Detroit, and other cities came to stay at the Grand; others built large and elaborate cottages on the bluffs. The East Bluff cottages, on state-leased land, are located on the bluff rising behind the proposed Mission District area.

Mackinac Island faced a crisis in the 1890s when the army decided to close Fort Mackinac and sell the national park. Secretary of War Daniel Lamont believed that the government should not be responsible for maintaining a summer resort for wealthy people. Islanders successfully lobbied Congress to transfer the national park to the state of Michigan, and in 1895 the country’s second national park became Michigan’s first state park, administered by the newly appointed Mackinac Island State Park Commission. Mackinac Island continued to grow and prosper as a resort, as evidenced by the predominance of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings on the island today. The village experienced substantial development to the northeast and west of its original boundaries, but that development consisted of private residences, plus a few hotels and large boardinghouses. Commercial buildings were confined to the original village limits, where restaurants, gift shops, hotels, and candy stores replaced the quaint French buildings that had enchanted earlier visitors. Private homes were increasingly converted to boardinghouses and hotels.

⁴ J. Disturnell, *Island of Mackinac and Its Vicinity*, 1875; reprint, Cheboygan, Michigan,: C.W. Page, 1977.

The island was modernized with electricity, running water, and telephones, along with telephone poles, a coal-burning electric plant, and a water-pumping station. When the first automobile appeared in the village in 1898, the islanders drew the line. The village council banned automobiles on village streets, and in 1901 the park commission banned automobiles in the park. As is often the case, the disappearance of the island's historic buildings generated interest in their history. Residents and cottagers wrote books on Mackinac Island history and erected historical monuments. In 1895, a group of islanders restored the Mission Church (located in the Mission District), recognizing its importance for its age and history to the island. In 1905, the Park Commission opened Marquette Park in the former soldiers' garden below the fort, and in 1909 dedicated the bronze statue of Father Marquette that still stands in the park.

The tourism-based prosperity that began on Mackinac Island in the late nineteenth century continued through the 1920s. During World War I, however, new construction slowed, and it diminished further in the 1920s. The Grand Hotel was an exception—an addition was built in 1912, a golf course in 1917, and in the 1920s a fifth floor was added and an outdoor swimming pool constructed. Certainly, this was evidence of wealth continuing to flow to Mackinac Island. Another indicator was Mackinac Island State Park's acquisition of several hundred acres during the 1920s. After World War I, a steadily growing number of visitors travelled to the island by auto instead of by railroad or steamboat. Two of Michigan's improved highways, the East and West Michigan Pikes, met in Mackinaw City in 1922. The following year the state began operating an automobile ferry across the straits from Mackinaw City to St. Ignace. But these developments had a greater impact on mainland tourism than on the island. In an effort to lure more auto tourists from the mainland, state park Superintendent Frank Kenyon proposed an auto garage on Mackinac Island where people could leave their cars while they toured the island, but it never came to fruition. Although illegal automobiles occasionally appeared on the island, and the ordinances prohibiting automobiles were challenged, they were not overturned.

The Great Depression slowed resort life on Mackinac Island. In the 1930s, tourism dwindled to a trickle, stores on Huron Street were vacant, some cottages on the bluffs were boarded up and overgrown, and the Grand Hotel came close to bankruptcy. A measure of relief came from federal and local public programs. The Civilian Conservation Corps undertook landscaping projects, repaired buildings at Fort Mackinac, reconstructed Fort Holmes, and built the Boy Scout barracks. Under the federal Public Works Act, an airport landing strip was built near the center of the island. Works Projects Administration (WPA) funds were used to hire Grand Rapids architect Warren Rindge to prepare a detailed historical and architectural report on the island's historic buildings.

The City of Mackinac Island initiated a local public works program when it created the Park and Harbor Commission in 1941. By selling revenue bonds, the Park and Harbor Commission raised funds to promote tourism and to undertake a number of civic improvements. These included buying and restoring the American Fur Company warehouse and Stuart House, building public bathrooms, and resurfacing the Arnold Line dock. The Depression extended through World War II on Mackinac Island, as wartime travel restrictions continued to limit tourism, and the relief provided by New Deal projects came to a halt.

When tourism recovered after World War II, it took on a different character than in the years before the Depression. The summer resort of the 1920s essentially continued a late Victorian lifestyle in late Victorian buildings. But the lifestyle of the 1950s was different. The U.S. economy was booming, and Michigan—led by the auto industry—was especially prosperous. A new state tourism campaign was designed to draw vacationers to northern Michigan. Automobiles were now the most common mode of travel to Mackinac Island, though the final stretch was still by ferry (or occasionally airplane), and on the island transportation was by foot, bicycle, or horse. When the Mackinac Bridge opened in 1957, it brought even more automobile tourists to the straits region. It was so much faster and easier to reach the island that day trips became popular. Economic recovery meant that empty stores, homes, and hotels were reoccupied.

Mackinac Island's tourist-based economy has continued to grow since the 1960s – today sources indicate approximately one to 1.2 million people visit the island each year. There has been infill development in the village and some large-scale development on other parts of the island, including new construction in the Mission District area. Yet history, more than ever, is a key element in Mackinac Island's appeal. Today the state park encompasses at least 83 percent of the island. Fort Mackinac, which has been systematically restored to its late nineteenth-century appearance, is a premier attraction. The state park commission has acquired and restored many of the island's most important historic buildings, including the Edward Biddle House, the Mission Church, the Indian Dormitory, the Mission House, and the William McGulpin House. The hotels and cottages that once were modern and fashionable are now historic and fashionable. The Mission District still retains a high-level of historic integrity and sense of place. The proposed Mission District flanks the downtown to the east as a compliment to the West End Historic District to the west of downtown Mackinac Island.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISTRICT

Michigan's Local Historic District Act, PA 169 of 1970, as amended, requires local historic district study committees to be guided by the evaluation criteria for the National Register of Historic Places in evaluating the significance of historic resources. The act also requires study committees to be guided by criteria established or approved by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (Section 3(1)(c)). In 2022, the State Historic Preservation Office issued criteria that elaborate on historic district boundary determinations and single resource districts.

In accordance with these legal documents and guidelines, the study committee has determined that the Mission District Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion A, for its association with historical events that have contributed significantly to the history of Mackinac Island, the State of Michigan, and the United States; and under Criterion C, for its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of architectural types, periods, and method of construction. The areas of significance are architecture, entertainment/recreation, ethnic heritage, and religion. The period of significance is from 1790, the likely date of the known log structures in existence in the district to 1941 and the commencement of the United States involvement in World War II. While there are mid-twentieth century buildings over fifty years old in the historic district the Study Committee does not feel they represent the predominant era of the development and identity of the east end of the island or the historic character of the island. The majority of

the historic properties in the proposed district are multi-storied nineteenth century homes, large rooming houses and hotels with similar materials and architectural elements - wood siding, gabled roofs, and porches.

The National Register Criteria

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

Criteria A: That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Mackinac Island as a whole has been designated a National Historic Landmark for its outstanding significance as a military outpost, fur trade depot, and - since the mid-nineteenth century – one of the country’s premier tourist destinations. The development of the Mission district area at the east end of the island has been overshadowed by more conspicuous development in the original village and the cottages of the west and east bluffs, yet the Mission District to the east end plays an integral and densely developed part of Mackinac Island history and contains a large percentage of the historic resources of the island. The major themes of Mackinac Island history are reflected in the district’s buildings, from the log houses of the fur traders and the simple vernacular houses of the workers in the fishing industry, to the fine large homes, cottages, hotels and rooming houses developed during the tourism era of the late nineteenth century to the Great Depression, as well as the mid-twentieth century period of renewed tourism and investment. There are examples of structures associated with equestrian activity so important to the island, as well as two significant historic church buildings.

Select examples include: (please see inventory forms as well)

6768 McGulpin Street - McGulpin Family house, Fur Trade/log construction, c. 1790

6670 Main Street - Mission Church, Religion, 1829

6836 Main Street - Sainte Anne Catholic Church, Religion, 1874/1890

1260 Truscott Street – Barn, Equestrian Use, c. 1860

6781 Main Street - Bennett Hotel, Tourism, c. 1890

6860 Main Street – Madame LaFramboise House, Fur Trade, 1842

1427 Brogan Lane - Pine Cottage Inn, Commerce, 1870

6734 Main Street - Jacob Wendell House, Commerce, 1846

Criteria C: That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The Mission District Historic District contains representative types of the island's residential architecture. At least one French colonial log building survives in the district on McGulpin Street. These rare, historic structures contribute to Mackinac's national significance. The William McGulpin house (moved from McGulpin Street to Fort Street in 1982) dates from 1790-91 and it is likely the former neighboring log house at 6768 McGulpin Street, known as the McGulpin Family house, dates from that time period. An original portion of the La Framboise House, now Harbour View Inn, (6860 Main Street) built in 1820 has sided log construction.

The Mission Church (6670 Main Street) and Ste. Anne's Church (6836 Main Street) and Rectory (6837 Main Street) represent religious architecture of the nineteenth century. A fine Greek Revival example is the Lafayette Davis House at 6806 Main, now Haan's 1830 Inn.

There are many examples of well-preserved two-story, front-gabled vernacular houses – the most common type of early nineteenth century house on the island. Bayview Bed and Breakfast (6947 Main Street), Bonnie Doone Cottage (6883 Main Street), the Bennett Hotel (6781 Main Street) are representative of the Queen Anne style. Other architectural styles popular during the period can be found in the Italianate Vernacular of Thuya Cottage (6948 Main Street), and the Colonial Revival portico added in the 1890s to the Madame LaFramboise House/Harbour View Inn (6860 Main Street), and Sainte Anne's Rectory (6837 Main Street). The mid-twentieth century structures in the district are representative of the post-World War II period when the ranch house exemplified the change to less ornate and elaborate structures.

As a group, the Mission Historic District is a dense neighborhood that includes examples of nineteenth century cottages, year-round homes, boarding/rooming houses, hotels, and churches of historic significance that flanks the island to the east end of downtown as the Westend Historic District neighborhood does to the west.

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PHOTOGRAPHS March 2023
All photographs taken by Jennifer Metz



Photo 1. Looking East down Main toward the Mission District



Photo 2. 6948 Main Street, c. 1850.



Photo 3. 6849 Main Street.



Photo 4. Saint Anne's Church, 6836 Main Street



Photo 5. Saint Anne's Rectory, 6837 Main Street



Photo 6. Harbour View Inn, formerly Madame Laframboise House, 6860 Main Street



Photo 7 – Mission Church, 1829, 6670 Main Street



Photo 8. Jacob Wendell House, 6734 Main Street



Photo 9 – 6784 Main Street



Photo 10 – 6823 Main Street



Photo 11 – The east end of Mackinac Island and Mission District from the bay.