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Heavenly Logs

Mission Point Resort highlights a visit to Michigan's Mackinac Island.

WHEN VISITORS FIRST STEP INTO THE LOBBY of Mission Point Resort, their eyes almost always look up. They take in 50-foot, nine-ton majestic trusses, converging at a height of 36 feet. "It resembles a 16-sided tepee," resort manager Bradley McCallum explains. "It's a majestic space that gives you pause no matter how many times you walk through it. Grand and profoundly warm, the space embodies the essence of northern Michigan. Deeply rooted in this region, in this special island, the space moves the soul in tones that feel instinctively authentic, real and local."

The sturdy, solid trusses, made of Norway pine and brought to Michigan's Mackinac Island from Bois Blanc Island (across Lake Huron and visible from the resort), symbolize the lobby's origin as the first meeting room for the multi-national Moral Re-Armament (MRA) movement, which promoted its philosophy of love and honesty as an ideological alternative to communism.

The structure does indeed seem to fulfill an old Indian prophecy: Someday, on the east end of the island, a great tepee will be erected. All nations will come there and learn about peace.

Norway pine logs form an eye-catching, tepee-style ceiling in the lobby at Mission Point Resort on Michigan's Mackinac Island. The resort opened in the 1950s as a conference center for a group promoting international moral re-armament.

When the facility opened in the 1950s as the MRA's World Conference Center, the group, under the leadership of the Rev. Frank Buchman, made the Upper Peninsula's peaceful Mackinac Island its world headquarters. It built a series of buildings, including the awe-inspiring, tepee-style lodge. The cavernous dining room also boasts intriguing log con-

Mission Point Resort photos



Mission Point Resort is a favorite sight for bicyclists, who flock to the island, where motor vehicles aren't allowed.

struction. “A lot of the wood to make the original buildings was brought over in the winter time,” McCallum explains, “so they had to use dynamite to break the ice and make way for the barges.”

Construction on what is now called Straits Lodge and Main Lodge began in the fall of 1955, with the large trusses for the Great Hall raised in early 1956. Gorgeous fireplaces, made with local limestone, also adorn the space, thanks to Friedrich Grebe, who the MRA discovered was as one of the area’s great stonemasons. The limestone vein that Grebe quarried ran right through his own property.

After the MRA left Mackinac Island in 1971, these buildings found a variety of uses before eventually becoming Mission Point Resort. The captivating story behind the structure is told in a film that runs in the resort’s on-site Observation Tower and Exhibits space. Besides the resort and MRA construction history, it shows actual footage of the hard-working men and women who created the complex:

some 145 volunteers from 23 countries who worked through inclement weather to build it. The workers transported everything from coffee to concrete over to the island on a 65-foot, flat-bottom landing craft. Footage includes workers hand-peeling the timbers.

The exhibits cover not only the diverse history of Mission Point Resort and Mackinac Island, but also information on freighters, shipping, Great Lakes shipwrecks, lighthouses and more. There is also a showing of the film “Somewhere in Time,” much of which was shot on Mission Point property.

While the resort’s way-up-high, tepee-style grand lobby may fascinate visitors, the Observation Tower invites you to look down, way down. Here, the most spectacular views on the island — and five floors of historical exhibits — await. Enjoy panoramic vistas of the island below, the mighty Mackinac Bridge and beckoning lighthouses.

Mission Point Resort’s design history

is enthralling for log buffs, to be sure. But besides intriguing design, the resort’s offerings coupled with charming Mackinac Island make for a great getaway. One never tires of the island’s backside, an interior where bike paths, gorgeous Victorian-style homes, inns aplenty, historic buildings, horseback and carriage tours and more await. No cars are allowed on the island, so even though summer months draw crowds, it remains relatively peaceful.

If you do nothing else, rent a bike — either from an island bike shop or your hotel — and pedal around the island on a paved path that takes you past breathtaking Straits of Mackinac vistas. As about 75 percent of the island is wooded, views are breathtaking. With its tree-lined roads and pathways, stunning limestone formations and numerous bluffs, Mackinac Island has a truly northern Michigan flavor.

Thanks to the network of roads and trails that crisscross the island, bike trails

Mackinac Means More Than Just Logs

Mackinac Island began to appear when the last glaciers receded from the region about 15,000 years ago. The island's cliffs and rock formations were created by the erosive action of the ancient Great Lakes on the resistant limestone bedrock. As the lake waters receded and the land rebounded from the weight of the glaciers, Mackinac Island rose to its present height, with its highest point at Fort Holmes, approximately 320 feet above lake level.

Covering 3.8 square miles, the island is located in Lake Huron at the eastern end of the Straits of Mackinac, between Michigan's Lower and Upper Peninsulas.

The island was home to Native American settlements before European exploration began in the 1600s. It also was a key site for the Great Lakes fur trade and home to Fort Mackinac, built by the British during the American Revolutionary War. It was the scene of two battles during the War of 1812.

In the late 19th century, the island became a popular tourist destination and summer colony, and that popularity gets stronger by the summer. Because automobiles were banned from the village in 1898 and from the park in 1901, transit on the island is generally by foot, horse, horse-drawn vehicle and bicycle, although snowmobiles are permitted in winter, and there is an airport connecting it to the mainland.

The entire island is listed as a National Historic Landmark. Battle sites, historic buildings, the fort and dozens of additional diversions entertain visitors. There are also a few golf courses, including the charming nine-hole 1898 Wawashkamo Golf Club. Among Michigan's oldest active courses, it is one of few American courses laid out in a links style that remains substantially unaltered.

One thing the island is rightfully famous for is fudge. Its fudge-making tradition dates to the years immediately following the Civil War,



Mission Point Resort photo

ABOVE: An aerial view of the sprawling Mission Point Resort conveys its remoteness on historic Mackinac Island, where a relaxed pace of life prevails.

and fudge remains the island's most popular and tastiest souvenir. The island boasts more than 15 fudge shops, and there's even an annual Fudge Festival, held every August. For more: mackinacislandfudgefestival.org.

To learn more about all that this idyllic destination has to offer, visit the island's official website: mackinacisland.org.

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are plentiful. You'll pass pretty cottages and inns decked with gingerbread trim, pastel colors and bright whites, old-fashioned gardens brimming with heirloom peonies and hollyhocks, and long inviting porches with gabled roofs. The Upper Peninsula island is postcard-perfect in every way.

Or maybe you'd prefer to meander through the island's interior. Forested hills, and both rugged and paved paths beckon.

A lot of the wood for the original buildings was brought over in winter, so crews had to use dynamite to make way for the barges.

Mission Point (the island's largest resort) is easy to get to while still being a little off the beaten path. It features the great Bistro on the Greens down by the water. Here, an entertaining putting green by the bistro allows kids to frolic while parents sip a glass of wine and listen to live outdoor entertainment.

At any time of day, scattered white Adirondack chairs on the resort's front lawns beckon. On a pleasant grassy knoll, guests spin cartwheels, fly kites and cavort along the peaceful shoreline, while parents do nothing more than slice a piece of cheese, grab a chunk of bread and toast to a sunset like no other. The energetic take a dip in the outdoor pool, rent kayaks on water's edge or arrange a tennis match on beachside courts. Up-close views of passing Great Lakes' freighters add to the ambience.

Mission Point Resort getaway packages include everything from ferry rides to and from the island to visits to the Butterfly House, bike rentals and admission to nearby Fort Mackinac. Not-to-be-missed sights there include Mission Point Museum views and bridge construction tidbits, lighthouse history and more.

The island also offers other must-see log structures.

Madame La Framboise's Harbour View Inn was originally a log home, built in 1822. Built for La Framboise

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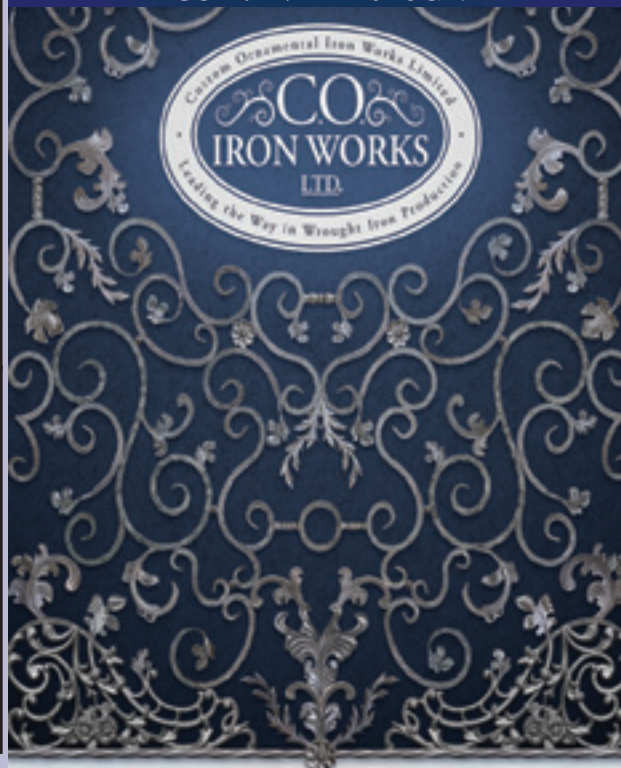
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Fort Mackinac's North Blockhouse, built in 1798, features an upper level made of overhanging logs.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources photo

by her son-in-law, Captain Benjamin Pierce (brother of U.S. President Franklin Pierce), the home was a solid, frontier-style log cabin on the main floor. The framed second story was considered more modern at the time.

On completion, the home, one of the most elegant on the island, entertained military personnel from Fort Mackinac, representatives of John Jacob Astor's fur company and visiting dignitaries, among them French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville. Skilled artisans carefully hewed the timbers and fitted the joints using simple hand tools. The logs were laid horizontally and mortised into upright columns. This technique — called *pièce sur pièce* — was popular among French-Canadian carpenters.

Today, the elegant inn is one of the prettiest on the island. Even if you're not staying there, stop in and look at the historic cut-out log area in the first-floor lobby. Plaques provide details about the original structure.

The story-and-a-half, gable-roofed, French-Canadian-style McGulpin House

was likely built in the 1700s. Its log style is *pièce sur pièce, à queue d'ronde* (squared horizontal logs with dovetail corners). It was moved from its original east-end location behind Ste. Anne Church to its present spot in 1982. Based on its construction techniques, it is clear that the house was probably built around 1780, when Mackinac Island was first settled. A cut-away section on the home's front siding reveals the original log craftsmanship.

The 1798 North Blockhouse at Fort Mackinac is a two-story square building with limestone walls on the first story and an overhanging log-style second story. 🏠

IF YOU GO: Mackinac Island is accessible by ferry and air from the mainland's Pellston Regional Airport, which has a log terminal building (see the December 2012 *Log Home Living*). Nightly rates at Mission Point Resort (906-847-3312, missionpoint.com) range from \$99 for a room in the Main Lodge during off-season to \$499 for a suite in season.

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