



P.O. Box 177
Empire, Michigan 49630

2000/2001 Vol.11, No.1

March 2000

GREETINGS FRIENDS and HAPPY YEAR 2000!!

News from Our President

In the last Newsletter I shared with you a letter dated September 27, 1999 from Ivan Miller, Superintendent of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore on the decision to demolish and remove buildings and ruins at the Theodore Beck Farm on South Manitou Island.

Little more than two months later on December 3, 1999, the Park made an abrupt switch and decided that many of the 300 buildings in the park would be preserved. The Traverse City Record-Eagle, in a front page headline the next day stated: "Park Service flip-flops its position on Dunes." (Please see this article printed in full later in the Newsletter). Both Vice-President Lynn Roe and Treasurer Joe Orbeck have reports on that meeting elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Also attending the December 3 meeting was Society past-President Paul Rocheleau, who spoke to both Ivan Miller and Duane Pearson, Assistant Superintendent, about the possibility of boarding up the Theodore Beck house to at least prevent it from further destruction (and hopefully restoration at some later date). Paul was encouraged by Ivan and Duane to pursue this idea and after securing interest from other members of his family, has put together a proposal to the Park. He has also inquired with our Society as to whether we would pay for at least some of the materials needed for the job. Your Board is close to a decision on this request (we are a bit scattered geographically at the moment). One thing is clear, however; if we in the Society do not preserve the Beck House then no one else will.

Society member Ethel Stormer was one of hopefully many persons who wrote to Ivan Miller in response to his September 27th letter on the Theodore Beck House. His response to her (in part) was:

"The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office has determined that the Theodore Beck farmhouse is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. We have added the Beck house to the Historic

Properties Management Plan, which we are working on now. At the last Historic Properties Management Plan public meeting, a relative of the Beck family expressed an interest in providing the materials and labor to cover the windows and doors of the Beck house. Occasionally there are youth groups on the island looking for volunteer projects, and one of these groups could help carry the materials to the site. Perhaps this is a project with which the South Manitou Memorial Society would like to get involved.

The Beck house will be treated like the other historic houses in the plan. It is of local significance and will be dependent upon private support for preservation. There are many buildings in the park that are more significant and are a higher priority for National Park Service preservation money. A partner would be permitted to make repairs to extend the life of the house. The roof is relatively intact, but all windows and doors are missing and the front and back porches are collapsing. The porches should be removed and the windows and doors boarded up. With repairs, the farmhouse might remain for many years. The other buildings at the Beck farm are in deteriorated condition and can not be saved. They will be removed or allowed to molder on site."

Perhaps one day our proposal to restore the George Conrad Hutzler and August Beck farms will become possible.

On December 17th, 1999, I had recovered enough from my triple-by-pass open-heart surgery to attend the Park's meeting on the General Management Plan, which will "describe the general path the National Park Service intends to follow in managing the Lakeshore for the next 20 years." Most of the meeting was devoted to the process that the plan will follow:

- 1. Collect data and identify issues - Winter 1999 and Spring 2000.
- 2. Develop and evaluate alternatives - Summer through Winter 2000.
- 3. Prepare and publish a draft plan and environmental impact statement - Spring through Summer 2001.
- 4. Revise and publish plan - Fall through Winter 2001.

There was no direct information or even mention of anything directly related to South Manitou Island.

In the several such meetings that I have attended, it appears that a different audience is attracted to each one and they bring up a different set of issues. The meeting on December 17 was no exception. There were three items that took up most of the public discussion. They were:

- 1. Park Trails - their maintenance, whether horses should use them, whether hikers could snow-shoe on them.
- 2. Parking at the Dune Climb and Platte River (Lake Michigan).
- 3. Property - there was a strongly held view by a small, but vocal, group that persons who sold their property to the park at its inception were "promised" free entry to the park - and now why are they having to pay? There was not anyone in attendance at the meeting who had heard of this agreement which did not satisfy the persons who demanded an answer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Donald A. Morris, President

News from our Board Members

The National Park Service held public meetings on December 3 and December 17, 1999 to provide information about the Proposed General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement and the Proposed Historic Properties Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.

Vice-President Lynn Roe and Treasurer Joe Orbeck attended the Dec. 3, 1999 Public Meeting at Park Service Headquarters. The attendance was approximately 50 people.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce and explain the first draft of the 'Historic Properties Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement?'. The final management plan is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2001. It will replace the plan written in 1980

The Park Service had previously requested suggestions, projects and priorities in park activities. These, we were told, have been considered in this draft. Our own suggestions were rejected (see the last Newsletter).

This first draft is a complex document of 150 pages. It consists-of maps-of park areas, descriptive surveys of these areas, listings of farms, buildings, present usage and conditions. Proposed alternatives are given, such as destruction, no action, preservation and restoration. These to be determined by policy, funds available, and outside partnerships. NPS proposes forming partnerships to accomplish this. One or several groups may submit proposals and approvals will be given according to the priorities list. There was a relative of Theodore Beck at this meeting and he was interested in providing materials for boarding up the house and making it secure. Possibilities of getting this done were discussed.

The Park Service did an excellent job of conducting the meeting and explaining the report and its purpose. It will guide Park Service activities for the next 20 years. The report is concerned mainly with the park areas on the mainland. Very little is written about South and North Manitou Island. No changes were suggested for the existing preserved areas and buildings.

Submitted by Lynn Roe & Joe Orbeck
SMMS Board Members

**Record Eagle Article
"Park Service flip-flops its position on Dunes"**

by Rebecca W. Kalajian
Record Eagle Staff Writer

Two years ago the National Park Service appeared ready to bulldoze several deteriorating Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore farmhouses and outbuildings. On Friday, park rangers unveiled an ambitious plan to preserve and restore many of the nearly 300 buildings in the park, including plans for a bed and breakfast, a working blacksmith's shop and an old fashioned grocery.

After a 60 day public comment period, the plan is slated for action, park rangers said. Rangers admit the change in philosophy was "a 180-degree turn" from the Park Service's prior stance, but said they had no options until private groups offered to get involved.

The park will lease many of the buildings to be operated either commercially or as space for non-profit groups and will even consider leasing the Sleeping Bear Inn in Glen Haven as a working bed and breakfast.

"Our policy had been to let the buildings deteriorate, but that was due to lack of funds and a sense of bewilderment about where the money would come from," said Bill Herd, park ranger. "A couple of years ago we were a bit more pessimistic, but now we're more open to possibilities with public involvement."

Public involvement in the park's case meant raising money and rolling up shirtsleeves. Shortly after the public outcry two years ago, a citizen's group called Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear formed to help the park scrape, paint and get cash for building preservation. "We are the group who can look for contributions and search for grant money," said Paula Leinbach, one of the groups board members. "Those are the things the park can't do itself."

With the group's help, the park wrote exact plans for preserving 98 of its buildings. After the public comment period is over in February, the park will begin actively seeking out "partners" to lease more of its 150 designated historic buildings

The partners would be responsible for rehabilitating any building leased to them as well as maintaining the building. Herd said that although no private residential leases would be considered, both corporations and non-profit agencies would be welcomed in the park as long as their intent was "appropriate."

The new plans don't resolve the ongoing conflict over so-called inholders, people who still live in the park on leases granted by the Park Service when the park was formed more than 25 years ago. Thirteen inholders who were slated to move in 1997 and 1998 have refused to leave, and say they can stay as long as the park has a backlog of non-historic buildings it intends to demolish. Rangers dispute the families-claims and say there is no backlog of buildings to be demolished. "The backlog they're referring to is a few buildings whose historic value we were determining," said Herd. "If these people weren't still in their homes, we would have removed them." The eviction matter remains in litigation in federal court, Herd said.

News from the National Park

Barn Restoration Project for 2000 Moves to South Manitou Island

The park will again be hosting our successful barn restoration project in June. This year the project is going on the road, or boat, to South Manitou Island.

Michigan Barn Preservation Network is once again providing the skilled labor to put on this workshop. The first was in 1997 at the John Burfield Barn in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. Last Year's workshop was also in Port Oneida at the Lawr Farm, which is now the new home of Shielding Tree Nature Center. The South

Manitou Memorial Society has graciously purchased much of the materials needed, and the Manitou Island Transit will be providing some of the transportation to the island and the job site.

This year's project on South Manitou Island will be held June 9th - 18th. Participants are not required to stay all week, but should sign up in the time they would like to spend. Camp sites and transportation to the island and the site will be provided.

Workers are not required to be skilled in the building trades, though experience will be helpful and appreciated. The purpose of the workshop is to teach the techniques and train owners and interested public how to do restoration work on a barn.

The project selected is the restoration of the August Beck Farmstead Barn Foundation. The foundation made of stacked white cedar cord wood set in mortar is the only portion of the barn that still remains. The stacked cord wood resembles stacks of wood you would find in your wood pile. The work is not complicated and represents a time when trees were abundant and labor was unskilled. This barn was constructed in the early 1800's.

This year's sponsors for the event include Michigan Barn Preservation Network, Manitou Island Transit, South Manitou Memorial Society, and Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. Interested parties should contact the park historical architect, Kimberly Mann (231) 326-5134 ext. 501, to sign up-for the workshop. Camp sites and boat transportation will be arranged for you.

"I Remember When"

Bertha, Stanley and the Bull: More Light on a Century Old Controversy

The Comments of your July correspondent to the *Newsletter of the South Manitou Society* deserve further clarification. I am in no way attempting to rewrite family history by what I have said concerning my great Aunt Bertha Path and the story of her son and the bull. I only provided another side of that story that many contemporary individuals knew of that event. There have always been two sides to that story and not just the one promulgated by one branch of the family. People are entitled to their opinions, but let us provide them with all the known facts.

We know from the diagnosis in Chicago that Stanley died of leukemia. Before Stanley was taken to Chicago by Bertha and once it was obvious that the child was seriously ill, a number of the island women rallied to Bertha's assistance. The child was carefully examined. There were no open wounds, no bruises, no abrasions. No true signs of an encounter with a bull. The child had always been rather delicate. There were signs of discoloration's under the unbroken skin. There were no doubt indications of the progressive course of the disease where the cells and tissue were gradually breaking down.

It is unfortunate that these unsophisticated island people who saw the child before he was taken to Chicago did not at that time have recourses to the law. Today we are much more aware of legal rights. If testimony had been given and affidavits taken, Bertha might have been spared much of the agony that followed. Once rumors were spread and believed by some, Bertha's fate was determined. What is more unfortunate than a mother who loses her only child, is then accused of neglect in that child's death, and is finally separated from her own husband? Your correspondent did not mention that Bertha was also accused of adultery.

This story of Bertha, Stanley, and the Bull first reached print in 1973. It has been repeated in print a number of times. In 1996 it was published in a report printed by the National Park Service in a limited edition of 200 copies. It has since been reprinted by a Michigan Book Shop. It is my own feeling that Bertha deserves a little better treatment than what she has received. In her eternal rest she deserves to have the other side of her story told and then we can truly say "She Rests in peace."

If anyone has anything to say further in this family epoch, I hope that they will contact me directly. I think that the South Manitou Memorial Society membership has heard enough of this tragic story!

Don Roy
P.O. Box 218
Whitefield, NH 03598

**A NORTHEAST GALE
SOUTH MANITOU ISLAND
NOVEMBER 1927**

The tall brave pines, back from the beach,
Swayed and rocked in the freshening wind that
Came sweeping down across northern Lake Michigan.

In the gathering darkness of the late November afternoon
Lake Michigan looked cold and angry.

All along the Island shoreline, giant breakers
Raced shoreward and pounded thunderously
Against the rapidly forming ice banks.

The waves arose like grey demons as they struck the outer bar,
Curled over and broke in a smothering deluge,
Sending up great sheets of leaden spray
For the driving wind to whip away.

Northpoint thrust its sharp nose into the maelstrom,
Forming a barrier reef for the bay,

And looked like a great white finger
As waves foamed and swirled over it

The afternoon waned rapidly before the low flying clouds
And the northeast gale bowed relentlessly
Across the turbulent Lake.

Over the raging surf came the alternate red and white flashe
Of the North Manitou Shoals Lightship,
Reeling and plunging in the heavy seas,
Sent forth its steady beam to guide
Any steamer making the passage that night.

By Gerald E. Crowner, Surffman
South Manitou Station 1926-1928

*Note: Thanks to Lynn Roe for submitting this poem on behalf of her father.

Editor's Note:

Thanks to all South Manitou Memorial Society Members who took the time to research the Historic Properties Management Plan and provide comment to Sleeping Bear Dunes N.L. It is a difficult document to digest, and a very important one for our group to follow the progress.

Thanks also to all of you who took the time to provide comment to the Theodore Beck Farm buildings. It looks like perhaps we may be able to stabilize the house for a while longer! Keep in mind the opportunity to come to the island and lend a hand, if necessary!

Remember Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park is also in the process of revising the General Management Plan for the park. This is a very important document - which we need to be involved with. The National Park Service Sleeping Bear Dunes maintains a web-site that contains much of the information we have been discussing in this Newsletter. You will find the Historic Properties Management Plan there and items relating to the General Management Plan Revision Process. That address is: www.nps.gov/slbc. Take a look!! You can comment to many public documents via email at slbc@nps.gov. Get involved, it's Our Island's History!

The South Manitou Memorial Society Newsletter is copyrighted 2000/2001. Vol.11, No.1
The deadline for articles to be included in the next Newsletter is June 15, 2000. Please submit to Newsletter Editor: Kathy Bietau at: 11196 W. Clear Lake Cir. Branch, MI 49402. OR E-mail to bietau@carrinter.net