



Manitou Islands Archives Newsletter

V2 No 2

Newsletter

Summer 2009



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Dedicates Restored Light on South Manitou Island

The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (NPS) invited the public to officially celebrate the relighting of the South Manitou Island Lighthouse the evening of Saturday, May 30, 2009. In spite of the unseasonably cool 40-degree temperatures, chilled further by northwesterly breezes, upwards of two-hundred people showed up for the historic event.

With the Maritime Heritage Alliance's *Madeline*, an authentic 92-foot replica of a nineteenth century schooner, adding ambience to the venue by running and tacking in the sunset, downwind and up between the islands and the mainland, the history of the Manitou Passage came to life at nine o'clock on the front lawn of the Maritime Museum in Glen Haven. After welcoming and introductory comments, Lisa Meyers, Chief Interpretation Ranger, introduced well-known storyteller

Michael Deren of Ann Arbor, who appeared as his "Past In Person" character, the captain of an 1875 schooner who had sailed the Great Lakes delivering passengers and cargo to ports from Buffalo to Chicago and Duluth. Playing his concertina, he shared songs about the history and traditions of the Great Lakes region and the Manitou Passage, with the audience joining in on the choruses.

♪ **"We're bound down,
Homeward bound,
Bound far down,
Through the passage!"** ♪

Between the old captain's performances, National Park Service interpreter Joanne DeJonge told about the treacherous Manitou Passage, its vital importance to early maritime transportation, its numerous shipwrecks and harrowing rescues; all of which



Joanne DeJonge

led to the building of the historic light station on South Manitou Island. To the assembled crowd, ranging in age from eight to eighty, she dramatically retold the harrowing tale of the *Three Brothers* shipwreck on South Manitou's Sandy Point, the ships eventual disappearance beneath the sands, and its mysterious reemergence in the spring, some eighty-five years later.

Superintendent Dusty Shultz then took the platform to introduce and recognize those who have participated in the reactivation of the South Manitou Island Light Station. In a special observance, she dedicated the project to the late George Firestone (Sonny) Grosvenor (1921-2008), in recognition of his half-century of faithful service as

passenger, freight, and mail carrier and to the islands.

Lighting the South Manitou Island Lighthouse was a *NPS Centennial Initiative* project. The Centennial Initiative is a ten-



year program to reinvigorate America’s national parks by 2016, the hundredth anniversary of the National Park Service. It requires that all federal funds granted be matched with private donations. Superintendent Shultz praised the efforts of participating partners, saying, “The South Manitou Island Light project was a success because of strong partnerships and commitments from private donors. Thanks to our generous supporters, the South Manitou light will shine on the horizon from May through October, and visitors to the island will be able to view the replica lens and lantern room and better appreciate all the work accomplished on this project.”



Michael Deren – *The Past In Person*

The Lakeshore was successful in winning a Centennial Initiative grant of \$40,500 for the reactivation of the light station, which will be matched by \$52,500 in private grants and donations, to make up the total \$93,000 cost of the project. For its part, the Lakeshore also participated by completely refurbishing the lighthouse tower and lantern room, clearing the original path to the rear of the light station, running weatherproof cabling from the island’s power source to provide the needed electric power for the new light system, and assisting with the installation of the new Fresnel lens and beacon system.

Key partners on the project included ...

- the Manitou Islands Memorial Society, as the participating nonprofit having the responsibility for raising the private funds,
- Manitou Island Transit and the Grosvenor family, whose generous contributions of good faith and fortune led to the procurement of the replica third-order Fresnel lens, specially fabricated by Artworks Florida of Orlando,
- Grosvenor nephew Geoff Niessink who spearheaded the project, and who, with his employer Electro-Optics

Technology, developed the innovative low wattage automated beacon, and

- Electro-Optics of Traverse City, who generously donated technology, time and materials.

Other partners included Traverse Bay Area Career Tech Center’s Manufacturing Technology Academy who contributed problem-solving concepts, and Andy McFarland’s Leelanau.Com, who provided for publicity and online fundraising.

Following the ceremony at the Maritime Museum, light refreshments were served, consisting of much-appreciated hot coffee, lemonade and delicious lighthouse-shaped frosted cookies. As dusk gathered, the crowd repaired to the beach for the official ceremonial re-lighting of the South Manitou light.

Seven miles across the waters, Jack Sheridan, great-grandson of Lightkeeper Aaron Sheridan, the first keeper of the light as it appears today, waited on South Manitou Island to toggle the switch that would energize the lamp whose light would beam through the new Fresnel lens over the waters of the Manitou Passage for the first time in a half century. About a half-hour after sunset, Superintendent Dusty Shultz radioed the request, "Honorary Lightkeeper Jack Sheridan, would you please light the light!"



Dusty Shultz



Gwen Glatz

Jack Sheridan lights the light

Within a few seconds the crowd responded with “Oohs” and “Aahs” and applause as a tiny jewel of white light appeared on the darkened nightward coast of South Manitou.

Honorary Lightkeeper Sheridan radioed back the message, “I would like to dedicate and commorate this lighting to the lightkeepers who trudged these stairs for over one hundred years to light this light.”

Thus ended what is certain to be recorded as an important event in the annals of the Manitou Passage, and in the record of noteworthy achievements of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.





More of the Story in Pictures ...



Dedication venue – the Maritime Museum at Glen Haven, with schooner *Madeline* passing by.



Audience enjoys singing with “Captain” Michael Deren.



Red Sails in the Sunset – the *Madeline* passes by.





More of the Story in Pictures (cont) ...



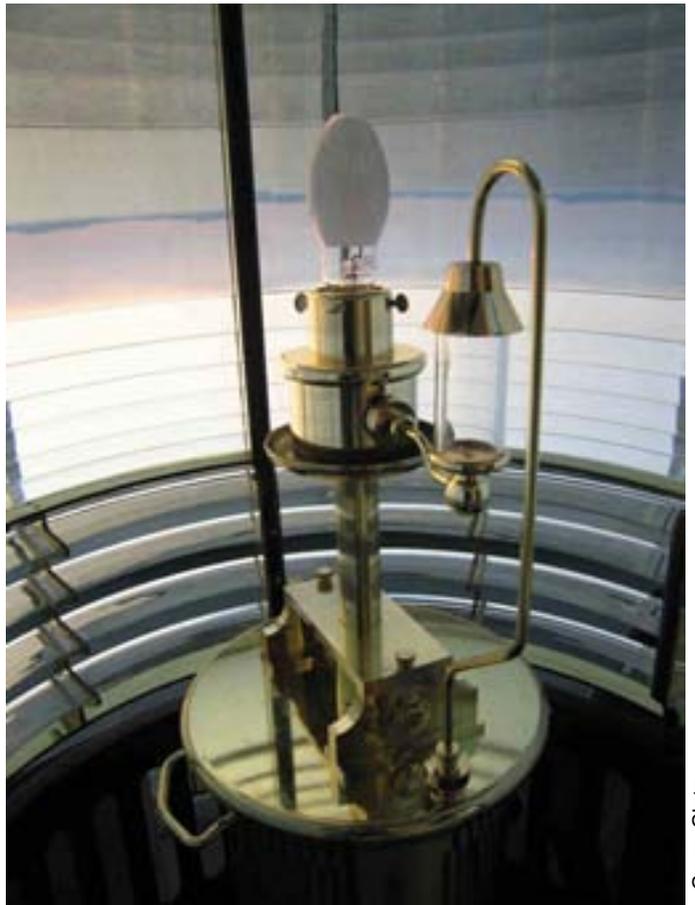
Gwen Glatz

Rangers clear path and lay new underground electrical cable.



Artworks Florida

Artworks Florida engineers install lens in the lamp room.



Gwen Glatz

Unique lamp assembly designed by Electro-Optics of Traverse City



Artworks Florida

Dramatic view inside the lighted Fresnel lens after dark.



More of the Story in Pictures (cont) ...



Earl jr - NPS maintenance crew stabilizes and repaints tower interior.



Geoff Niessink completes lamp assembly in the lamp room.



NPS electrician Tim and Mike Grosvenor ironing out a final wrinkle.

All photos this page – credits to Gwen Glatz



Geoff Niessink – careful hands finish the job.



Project spearhead Mike Grosvenor gratified by a great result.



Steve Sheridan

The South Manitou Island light comes on again, after half-century of darkness.



ManitouIslandsArchives.Org
PO Box 604
Grand Haven, MI 49417-0604 USA