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LANSING



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DIRECTOR

1/17/15

FWNHA Members
PO Box 104
Copper Harbor, MI 49918

Dear FWNHA Members,

SUBJECT: Fort Wilkins Historic State Park 2014 Year In Review

As we move into the New Year, I want to pause and look back on some of our shared accomplishments from this past year.

“Old Fort Wilkins” saw 121,000 visitors in 2014 finishing just several hundred visitors behind 2013. These great use numbers are in large part due to the programs and events sponsored by the Fort Wilkins Natural History Association (FWNHA). I can’t thank the FWNHA enough for their continued support. I would also like to thank all of the individuals and groups who volunteered their time and resources to do programs. Their expertise and passion show. Their efforts help to make Fort Wilkins the special place it is.

FWNHA SPONSORED PROGRAMS IN 2014

- Memorial Day Program
- Living History Program (Role Players)
- Battery D 30th Anniversary Event
- Fall Spoo-Tacular and Geocaching Event (New 2014)
- 25 Evening/Educational Programs
- 2 Meteor & S’mores Events

It’s hard to believe that Battery D celebrated their 30th year at Fort Wilkins this past summer. Attendance was great for the event with a few thousand people showing up to view camp life and, of course, watch the Artillery drills. The FWNHA also sponsored the 1st Annual Spoo-Tacular. This 1st time fall event turned out great. This Halloween themed event featured trick-or-treating, campsite decorating, costume contest, and a spooky fort featuring the return of the 1867 fort occupants. I predict that this will become one of our busiest weekends within the next year or two.

Photos: Battery D, 30th Anniversary

Photo of Civil War Era Medical Demonstration



Photo of Crowd watching the Artillery Drill



Photos: Fall Spoo-Tacular
Volunteers dressing for the Fort



Fort Spoo-Tacular



Fort Spoo-Tacular



Fort restoration efforts continued in 2014. A wide variety of projects were accomplished ranging in scale from painting projects to replacing the roof on the West Barrack. While the West Barrack roof was a big job, the park staff was able to handle it and do a terrific job. We've also made strides in replacing the roof on the 1930's Life Saving Station at Eagle Harbor. Sanders and Czapski' were contracted to provide the historic design for the project. The roof was bid out and a contractor will install a new cedar shingle roof in the spring.

Some of the restoration projects completed in 2014 were:

- Cellar/Foundation Restoration under West Officer's Quarters Kitchen
- Replacement of West Barrack Roof
- Restored Parade Grounds Flag Stand
- Continued Stockade Restoration Efforts
- Copper Harbor Lighthouse fascia and soffit repair
- Inspected porches on all fort buildings and replaced white wood where needed
- Window glazing
- Constructed new door for East Officers Quarters
- Restoration of the south exterior wall on the West Barrack

New Barrack Roof

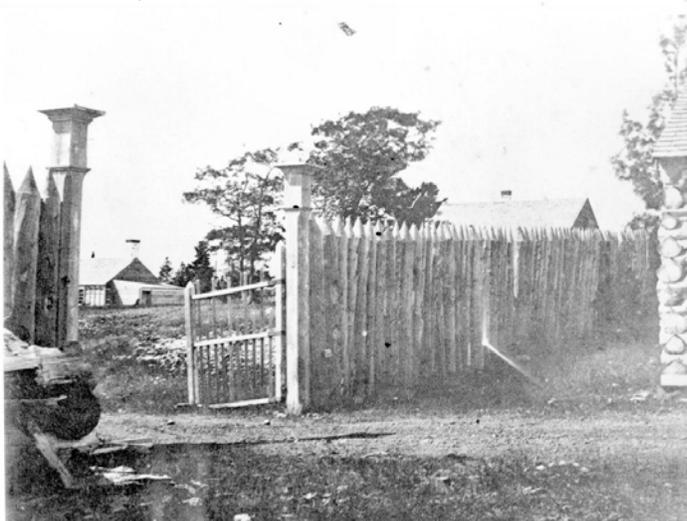


Michigan Tech was back at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park in 2014 conducting an archaeological investigation of the Pittsburgh and Boston Mining Company site (1844-1847) located within the park. One of the discoveries made during the dig was that of a sandstone foundation. Research conducted indicates that the foundation was that of a storage building. The project was funded by a grant from the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission and the Recreation Passport.

The Historic Structures Report for the Copper Harbor Range Light Station is nearly complete. The State Historic Preservation Office has provided their comments on the 95% draft. This important planning document will help to guide the restoration, preservation, and use of the range light station. We are currently planning on starting exterior restoration of the Range Lighthouse next summer.

We have accomplished a lot together over the last few years and next year will be no exception. Working with the Keweenaw County Historical Society we plan on excavating the historic launch ways for the Eagle Harbor Life Saving Station Boathouse. We also plan to have MTU back at the park to continue archaeological research at the Copper Harbor Range Light Station if we can secure the funding. If the dig doesn't occur this year it will take place in 2016. The fort stockade will look dramatically different in 2015 as the gates will be restored to period (1867-1870). The current gates were constructed by the WPA in the 1930's.

Historically Accurate Stockade Gate



As another summer at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park approaches I look forward to working together to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. I want to take one last opportunity to thank the FWNHA for their efforts to promote the area, preserve our history, and share the Fort Wilkins story. If you have any questions or ideas, please contact me at 906-289-4215.

Sincerely,

Robert Strittmatter, Park Supervisor
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Parks & Recreation Division
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