

Mackinaw City's Restored Pest House Is One of a Kind in United States

Students Get First Look at New Addition to Historical Village

The Pest House, the old infirmary that has been under restoration in Mackinaw City, was unveiled Friday, May 19, to give fourth and seventh grade students a first look at an old institution. The building is in the Mackinaw Historic Village park. The infirmary, taking its common name from the word pestilence, was used to keep patients with smallpox and other diseases in medical isolation to avoid contaminating others, a common way to deal with contagious illnesses at the time.

It served as a functioning infirmary between 1880 and 1920, but was located elsewhere in the area. Recently, members of the Mackinaw Area Historical Society transported the building to the Historic Village site. It is the first fully restored building on the premises.

The Pest House is the only original structure of its kind known to remain in existence in the United States, according to the historical society.

To add realism to the student visit, the hosts dressed in clothing like that worn when the infirmary was operational. Dr. Kurt Grebe, historical society president, dressed as a turn-of-the-century physician. His wife, Carol, a registered nurse, dressed as a nurse. Mary Lou Peters served as moder-



Mackinaw City fourth graders learn about the reconstructed infirmary at Mackinaw Historic Village, which is the only structure of its kind in the United States. Dressed in clothing from 1880 to 1920, Nurse Carol Grebe (far left) stands next to Doctor Kurt Grebe as Mary Lou Peters narrates. (Photographs courtesy of Peg Smith)

ator. The students learned about smallpox and the chances of survival for those who contracted the disease when the Pest House was in full swing.

Approximately one-third of smallpox patients survived, and most were kept isolated for about two months. The outhouse and well were outside.

Smallpox produced noticeable

marks that lasted for life, and doctors at the time did not understand the germs associated with smallpox, cholera, typhoid fever, diphtheria, or scarlet fever.

The Pest House is the first of a series of buildings the historical society hopes to move to the site and restore. While such work is underway, the Pest House is closed to visitors.

"The building is definitely not open to the public," said Dr. Grebe, "but the work is complete and we felt it was an educational opportu-

nity for the young folks."

The next major project is a one-room schoolhouse that has been loaded onto a trailer and is ready to be transported to the site. The group is searching for other suitable structures and does not accept imitations.

Historic architect Richard Neumann of Petoskey ensures that all buildings are rehabilitated and furnished authentically.

With his help, the historical society and the Village of Mackinaw City hope to reconstruct



The "Pest House" is a recently reconstructed infirmary near Mackinaw City. The building was used as a live history lesson for area fourth grade students Friday, May 19.

an entire village. There are only two buildings there now, the Pest House and a storage building to house donated historical items awaiting display. The front of the storage building is

being disguised as an old gas station, and the society is looking for gas pumps to go with it.

Historic Village on Wilderness Park Drive, a short distance from Central Avenue in Mackinaw City.

Hessel Drum Project Launched To Encourage Culture Awareness

The Hessel Indian community is meeting regularly to work on the drum and socialize at a potluck supper. The next drum social meeting will be Friday, June 9, at 6 p.m. at the Tribal Center on Three-Mile Road in Hessel. Another will be Friday, June 23. Anyone who plans to eat is asked to bring a dish to pass.

Drums symbolize the heartbeat for some groups, and can have their own powerful spirit. Traditional drums are made of deer, elk, horse, or buffalo hides and the Hessel drum is being made of a buffalo hide donated by Ron Hudack of DeTour and Chris Hudack of Cheboygan.

Approximately 14 people have been at work on the drum for nearly a month.

Local volunteer Basel Willis is leading the initiative, and

pitched the idea to Lisa Burnside and Arlene Graham of the Youth Education and Activities program.

"We're going to bridge that generational gap between the youth and the elders and build community awareness with drumming," Mrs. Burnside said. "The young people are learning the traditional teachings of the drum. They're learning the importance of the drum to the community and how it came to be in addition to actually making the drum."

Mr. Willis has been joined by drum teachers Gene Biron of St. Ignace, Leroy Bennett of Canada, and Curtis Hopkins of Sault Ste. Marie, who are assisting him with lessons, drum construction, and traditional teachings.

Children's Summer Reading Program Begins June 7 at Sault Library

A children's summer reading program will begin at Bayliss Public Library in Sault Ste. Marie Wednesday, June 7. This summer's theme is "Paws, Claws, Scales, and Tales" and the program is open to children up to sixth grade, and is free of charge.

Geri Taeckens and her service dog, Kojak, will begin the seven-week series of programs by presenting her new book, "Walking Along With My Dog," June 7, Thursday, June 8, and Saturday, June 10.

Preschool sessions will be offered each Wednesday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., and sessions for elementary school children will

be offered Thursdays at 1 p.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m.

To enroll a child in the summer reading program, call Debbie Lehman at (906) 632-9331 or e-mail her at debbiel@uproc.lib.mi.us.

CMU Dean's List

Heather May of Mackinac Island, Chelsea Laprairie of St. Ignace, and Charles Tamlyn of St. Ignace were among students named to the spring honors list at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant. Those honored earned a 3.5 or better grade point average, on a 4.0 scale.

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