

***McGULPIN POINT LIGHTHOUSE***

***EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN***

## McGULPIN POINT LIGHTHOUSE



The McGulpin Point Lighthouse

COURTESY PHOTO

**McGulpin's Point Light** (1869) is 2 miles west of Old Mackinac Point Light near the Mackinaw City village limit. Deactivated in 1906, until the fall of 2008, the lighthouse was a private residence and the property was not open to the public. Only a partial view of the McGulpin's Point light was available from the road, and due to trees, the McGulpin's Point lighthouse was not visible from the Straits of Mackinac

Newspaper & Date Unknown

# McGulpin Point Lighthouse celebration set May 8

## Emmet County lighthouse relighting anniversary coincides with Mackinaw Maritime Festival

**F**or more than 100 years, the McGulpin Point Lighthouse beacon that guided vessels through the Straits of Mackinac stood in darkness after it was decommissioned in 1906.

In May 2009, however, the light was returned to service as the newest addition to the public park property owned by Emmet County. The county purchased the lighthouse, acreage and adjoining 336 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline in 2008 and has since renovated the building's interior to period-decor.

Last May, a relighting celebration drew 1,200 visitors from around the U.S. On Saturday, May 8, the county will celebrate the one-year relighting anniversary with a ceremony and refreshments.

"This lighthouse sits on the oldest piece of deeded property in Emmet County," said Jim Tamlyn, chair of the county board of commissioners and a resident of Mackinaw City.

The anniversary celebration is planned to coincide with the Mackinaw Maritime Festival,

which is taking place throughout the Mackinaw City area Friday-Saturday, May 7-8. Events include tours of the retired Coast Guard icebreaker Mackinaw, performances and speakers, including a panel of survivors from the Cedarville shipwreck in the Straits.

From 1-5 p.m. on May 8, visitors can tour McGulpin Point Lighthouse and share an historic dessert. At 2:30 p.m., Mackinaw City resident Sandy Planisek will present the history of McGulpin Point on the grounds. At 3:30 p.m., Tamlyn will tell the story of the "Big Rock" at the shoreline, which for centuries has been used as a benchmark for water levels.

"The large boulder was described in a letter sent back to France in 1749 as at times high and dry, and other times totally covered by water," said Tamlyn. "That led the letter-writer to conclude that the Straits went up and down by eight feet over periods of time."

At the nearby Headlands property, a 600-acre Emmet County-

owned park west of Mackinaw City, another significant event will be taking place Friday, May 7 to coincide with the festival.

A "Maritime Stargazing" presentation will feature astroscoper, author and storyteller Mary Stewart Adams of Harbor Springs, who will lead the program that begins at 7 p.m.

All ages are welcome, and refreshments will be served. Telescopes will also be available, or visitors may bring their own. Meet at the Beach House at the Headlands to learn about the celestial wonders of the night sky.

Adams is among a group of area residents currently pursuing Dark Sky Park designation for the Headlands, which would make it one of just a handful in the country through the International Dark-Sky Association. The county board recently gave its blessing to the group's efforts. The vigorous application process requires public participation and conscientious efforts to limit light pollution for optimal night-sky viewing.

# Let there be light

**Historic McGulpin Point lighthouse reopens Saturday with ceremony**

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MACKINAW CITY — While Saturday's re-lighting ceremony at the McGulpin Point Lighthouse will call attention to one of the Great Lakes' oldest lighthouses, officials say the historical significance of the area goes well beyond the shipping and maritime industries.

Multiple historical records reference the property long before the lighthouse was established in 1869.

"When we started researching the property, we uncovered so much historical significance," county commissioner and historical commission member Jim Tamlyn said.

The Straits area property was key to both the British and French empires in the 1700s, and it was one of the first surveyed in Michigan by the nation's surveyor-general in the 1800s.

The property was originally deeded to Patrick McGulpin in 1811 by President James Madison and today, references to the land exist in the national archives of the Canada, France and Britain.

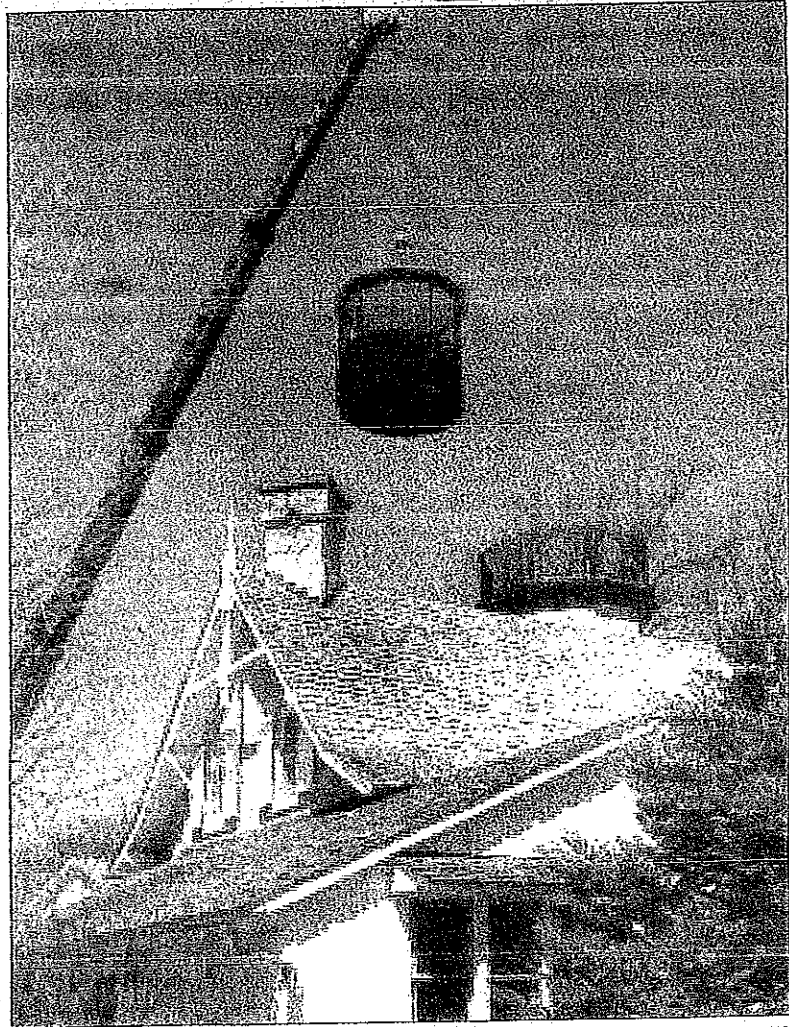
But Europeans were not the only people to value the point for its proximity to the Straits of Mackinac.

"The land was impenetrable in some areas," said tribal chairman Frank Ettawageshik. "The water was the freeway."

Ettawageshik is just one of a host of dignitaries scheduled to speak at the Saturday ceremony, designed to focus on the different facets of the property's historical significance.

"We're calling it the McGulpin Point Historical Site," Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association president Dick Moehl said.

Efforts are under way to furnish the lighthouse in turn of the century period complete with



COURTESY PHOTO

**Lighthouse restoration work is performed earlier this year at McGulpin Point.**

a wood burning stove, Hoosier cabinets and similar era tables and chairs.

Besides both Christian and Native invocations, patriotic and tribal music, the day's program will also include remarks from the United States Coast Guard.

"It's great when organizations like Emmet County step forward to help preserve such an important part of our history for the public to enjoy," said Captain Mark Huebschman.

The county purchased the property for \$720,000, although it was previously valued at \$1.75 million. County officials are looking for volunteers from local docents to

keep it open on the weekends this summer.

State Sen. Jason Allen, who along with U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, is scheduled to say a few remarks, said the restoration of the lighthouse will be another cog in Northern Michigan's tourist industry.

"Studies show that cultural tourism is a way to attract visitors to the area," he said.

The public is invited to attend 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. Shuttle service will be offered at two off-site parking locations at the Historic Village, across the street from the Headlands entrance, and at Mackinaw Schools on Central Avenue.



**McGulpin Point Lighthouse** (1869) is located on a bluff overlooking the Straits of Mackinac, 2 miles west of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse near the Mackinaw City, Michigan village limit. McGulpin Point Lighthouse was deactivated in 1906. Until recently the lighthouse was a private residence and the property was not open to the public.

After the lighthouse property was offered for sale for several years, Emmet County agreed to purchase the lighthouse for \$720,000 in the summer of 2008. In the Spring of 2009 Emmet County replaced the long missing light & lantern room and began returning the residence portion of the lighthouse into a museum dedicated to the history of McGulpin's Point Light and the surrounding McGulpin family land claim. Since May 30th, the McGulpin Point Light shines across the Straits for the first time since 1906.

The grounds are open anytime. Over time, the residence has become a museum, but I think the best reason for entering the building is to climb the winding stairway to the top of the tower.

Free!





Restored McGulpin's Point Lighthouse - June 12, 2009

## Design and operation [ edit ]

The McGulpin Point Light, a true lighthouse with a light tower and attached lighthouse keeper's living quarters, was completed by the United States Lighthouse Board in 1869 at a cost of \$20,000. The living quarters were built as a vernacular 1½-story brick structure. The lighthouse operated during the Great Lakes navigation seasons from 1869 until 1906.

The design was so successful that the Lighthouse Board chose to use this 1868 design in the construction of Eagle Harbor Light in 1871; White River Light in 1875; and Sand Island Light in 1881.<sup>[5]</sup> It is a "mirror image of the design" used at Chambers Island Light and Eagle Bluff Light in the "Death's Door" area. The design is sometimes called "Norman Gothic" style.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

James Davenport was the only lighthouse keeper at this light, and served for 27 years.<sup>[8]</sup> Correspondence files in the National Archives in Washington show that Davenport made weekly trips through the snow to the lighthouse to report on its condition to the District Inspector in Milwaukee. Perhaps more importantly, these letters also show that he may have played a critical role in the opening of navigation every spring by reporting weekly, and sometimes even more frequently, on ice conditions in the Straits. Because Davenport was the only Straits keeper to submit such frequent reports, it would appear that the Inspector used these reports to gain an understanding as to when navigation would be open throughout the lakes.

## MCGULPIN POINT LIGHT

SOUTH POINT MICHILIMACKINAC HARBOR, LAKE MICHIGAN, NEAR MACKINAW CITY, MICHIGAN

Station Established: 1869

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1869

Operational? NO

Automated? N/A

Deactivated: 1906

Foundation Materials: UNKNOWN

Construction Materials: BRICK

Tower Shape: OCTAGONAL

Markings/Pattern: NATURAL WITH DECAGONAL LANTERN

Relationship to Other Structure: ATTACHED

Original Lens: THIRD AND A HALF ORDER FRESNEL

### Historical Information:

- As maritime traffic increased in the Straits of Mackinac the need for lights along the way also increased. Waugoshance Light marked the entrance to the Straits but sailors were on their own when they entered.
- Congress approved the construction of a lighthouse and fog signal at McGulpin Point in 1854. However, 15 years would pass before construction began in 1869.
- McGulpin Point Lighthouse was built using the same "Norman Gothic" design as Chambers Island and Eagle Bluff. This design would also be the template for Eagle Harbor, White River, Passage Island, Sand Island and Squaw Island.
- The tower and attached Keeper's Quarters were built of "Cream City" brick, which are bricks made from clay found near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The color of the clay which was used heavily in the area, gave it the name Cream City.
- The tower is attached to the Keeper's Quarters on the Southwestern corner. It was topped of with a decagonal (ten sided) cast iron lantern and fitted with a Third and a Half Order Fresnel lens.
- In 1906, it was decided that McGulpin Point Lighthouse was no longer of aid as the Old Mackinac Point lighthouse was more visible to traffic in the Straits. It was decommissioned after just 37 years in service and at some point the lantern and Fresnel lens were removed.
- The property was sold to a private owner and was a private residence until 2008. Emmet County bought the property and have restored the lighthouse including installing a rebuilt lantern. The lighthouse is now a private aid to navigation and is open to the public.

