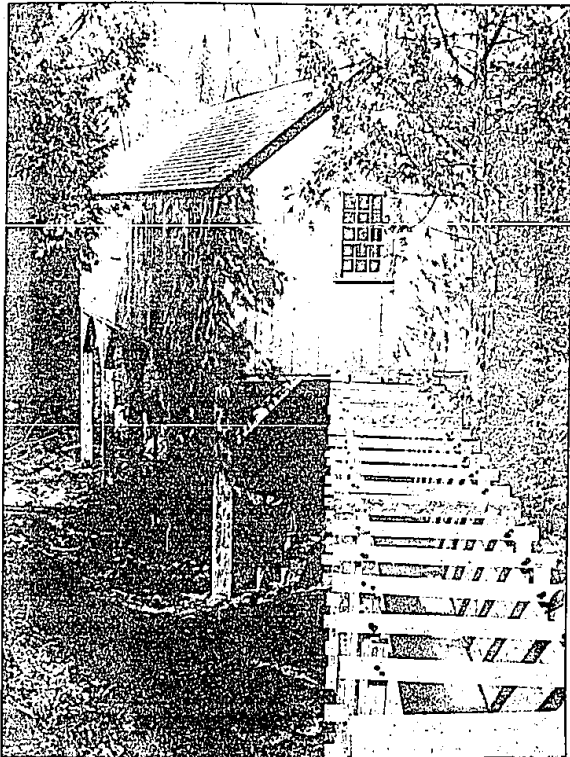


Old Mill Creek

94th and newest state park rooted in 1780s



Old Mill Creek's vintage sawmill once furnished lumber used in building Fort Mackinac, a British garrison. It's now Michigan's only working water-powered sawmill and a centerpiece for the state's newest park.

A rush of water and the thundering roar of a 1780s sawmill signaled the opening of Michigan's 94th state park recently. Old Mill Creek State Historic Park, a nationally registered historic site, commemorates Northern Michigan's first industrial center and British colonial life at the Straits of Mackinac. Old Mill Creek is the first major new tourist attraction in the Straits area in 20 years. It is three miles east of Mackinaw City on U.S. 43 overlooking the Straits and Mackinac Island.

The most elaborate "craft demonstration" ever undertaken by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, the 550-acre park features Michigan's only working water-powered sawmill.

The new park is on densely wooded land at the estuary of Mill Creek, a parcel known as "private claim 334." Deeded to Scotch immigrant millwright Robert Campbell in 1780, Mill Creek soon became a thriving industrial community feeding the lumber needs of both the island's growing community and Fort Michilimackinac.

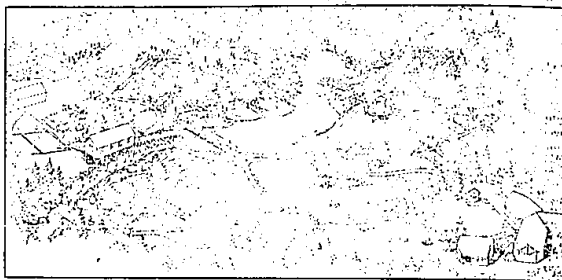
In fact, the Mill Creek sawmill furnished most of the lumber used in building the new British garrison, Fort Mackinac, and in building the Mission Church and the Mission House.

In addition to this vintage sawmill, housed in a 12-by-40 pine building perched 12 feet above the bubbling stream, the new park features extensive nature trails, a working beaver dam, mill pond, ramp to a bluff viewpoint, picnic areas and concessions.

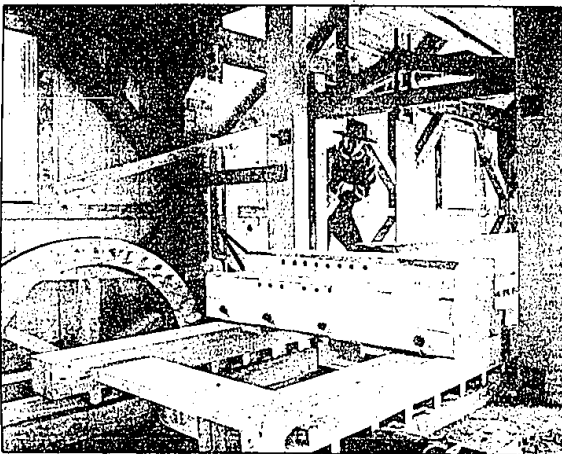
An educational center offers continuous showing of a 12-minute audiovisual program describing colonial life on the Straits and the growth of the Old Mill Creek community from 1780-1839.

Discovered almost accidentally by Cheboygan high school teacher Ellis Olson some 12 years ago, the Old Mill Creek site is now about 50 percent complete.

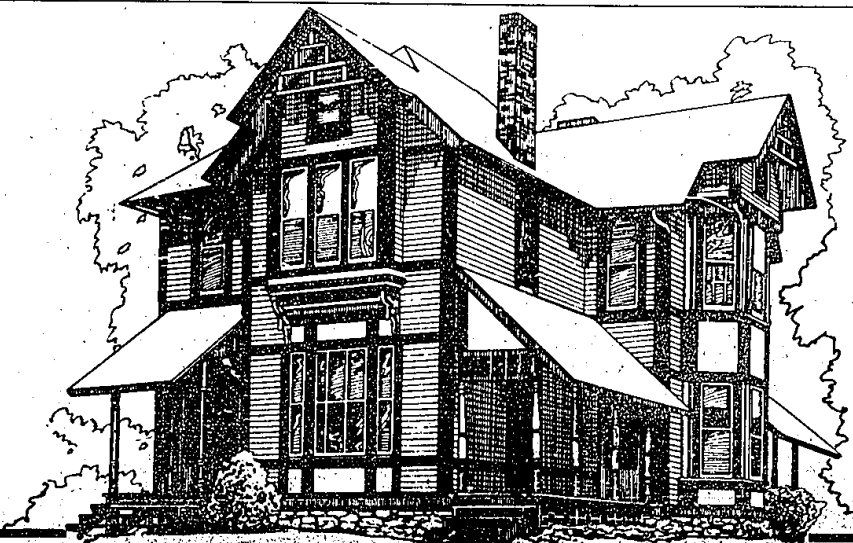
Archaeological excavations will continue throughout the summer to expose building locations and habitation patterns through artifacts discovered. The project was financed by the sale of revenue bonds by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission and admission fees to other historic sites and by Federal grants.



The 550-acre Old Mill Creek State Historical Park includes a vintage sawmill (above, left) perched 12 feet above a bubbling stream, as well as extensive nature trails, a working beaver dam, mill pond, picnic areas and concessions.



A six-foot vertical blade in the Old Mill Creek sawmill bites through hand-hewn tree at 120 strokes per minute. Hourly demonstrations by costumed guides are provided in the new state park at the Straits of Mackinac.



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