

# Apostle Islands

NATIONAL LAKESHORE • WISCONSIN



National Parks Centennial 1872-1972

Here America's northland sings to you of rocky islands in a blue inland sea and of forests where dark spruces contrast with pale birches. It sings a song of the redman, for this is the home of Longfellow's Hiawatha. This is a virginal place, cool and clean, with clear air and pure water.

The new Federal parkland will include 20 of the 22 islands in the archipelago off the tip of Bayfield Peninsula and 10 miles of the mainland shoreline. The heavily forested islands range in size from tiny 3-acre Gull Island to 10,000-acre Stockton Island. Here in this unspoiled northern Wisconsin country is opportunity for refreshment and re-creation.

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

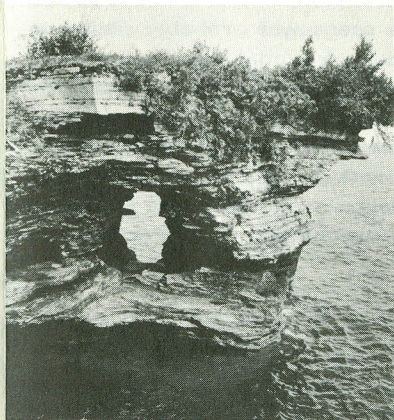
There are a few theories on how this group of islands got its name. A fanciful one is that it came from a band of pirates who lived in a cave on one of the outer isles and preyed on Lake Superior shipping. These fellows called themselves "the Apostles." The more generally accepted story is that the name came from a Jesuit missionary who looked out from a high bluff and saw 12 islands. Despite this explanation, none of the islands is individually named for one of Christ's 12 disciples. Some of the names—such as Oak, Otter, or Raspberry—are English translations of Indian names. Manitou means Spirit. Hermit Island, on the other hand, was named for its solitary inhabitant in the late 1800's. For years people have dug in vain for a hoard of gold and silver coins he supposedly buried on the island.

There is an Indian story about the creation of the islands, too. According to Chippewa legend, a Manitou, or Spirit, pursued a great stag and unsuccessfully launched his arrows at it. The deer reached the shore of Lake Superior and plunged in. Becoming very angry, the Manitou fitfully picked up handfuls of rocks and threw them at the escaping animal. These rocks fell into the water and became the Apostle Islands.

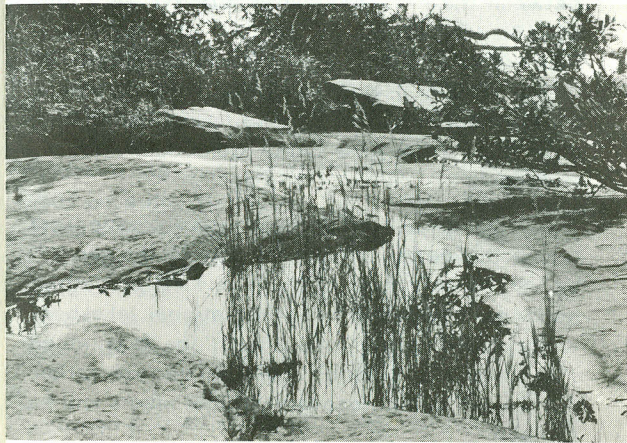
Probably the best known of the Indian legends about this territory is the one Henry Wadsworth Longfellow put into poetry in "The Song of Hiawatha." Longfellow learned of the story from the early American ethnologist Henry Schoolcraft, who explored the area in the 1820's and married the niece of a local Chippewa chief. As a girl, his wife had heard tales around the Chippewa campfires about the great deeds of the demigod Manabozho—whom Schoolcraft and subsequently Longfellow confused with the real Iroquoian Hiawatha.

#### THE LOOK OF THE LAND

Most of the Apostle Islands are still wild, though man has been here for a long time. The first inhabitants were the Indians, who lived for centuries in harmony with the land. Then came the lumberjacks, who sheared off the bigger and "better" trees, and quarrymen, who cut sandstone. All that has passed. The commercial fishermen's weathered shacks have tumbled down, the quarries are overgrown, and a luxuriant second growth of trees is spread over the land. Despite man's intrusions, the



*"By the shores  
of Gitche Gumeo,  
By the shining  
Big-Sea-Water..."*



Apostle Islands retain a picturesque and peaceful beauty.

In the vastness of Lake Superior, the largest fresh-water lake in the world, man's works seem insignificant. One of the great dramas here is the continual interaction of water and earth. Water, in the form of glaciers, created the islands and the lake itself. Since then, the assault of the elements on rock masses has produced striking patterns in stone. Waves, currents, and winter wedges of ice have cut into the island shores. Stone arches have been hollowed out of sheer sea cliffs. The shores of some islands look like colonaded cloisters. Sizable caverns extend in and under the ledge rock. During storms, big waves slap into these caves with a thunder-like sound. It was this ominous booming that prompted the Indians to name Devils (Evil Spirit) Island. On the north shore of Devils Island near the lighthouse is a particularly fine display of sculptured rock.

The erosion of the rock cliffs is still going on. As one pillar tumbles or one ledge falls, another is formed; this gives an illusion of permanence to the shoreline conformation. The same deception occurs in the forest above the rocks. In seemingly quiet and peaceful woodlands, plants are sprouting, growing, dying, and decaying; animals—vertebrate and invertebrate—are feeding, being fed upon, and reproducing. Change is the normal order of things.

While man can quickly and drastically alter the environment, nature normally changes the scene in a slow and orderly process called succession. Such has been the case with the plant communities of the Apostle Islands. About 13,000 years ago, the retreating glaciers left a mantle of sand and gravel on the old bedrock. Pioneer plants took root on the raw soil. The scene was probably similar to that of the arctic tundra today. During centuries upon centuries of life, death, and decay, a thin layer of organic soil accumulated. This soil now supports a northern hardwood forest of maple, aspen, and birch, with occasional groves of pines. Secluded boggy lakes, hidden by dense encircling stands of spruce, occupy depressions in the bedrock.

#### **DEER, FLIES, AND FISH**

Many places across the country today have an "overpopulation" of deer. The large predators that helped nature maintain a healthy dynamic balance between the deer and the vegetation were long ago killed off. Without the culling effect of predation, and with lumbering operations bringing about temporary increases in the supply of browse plants, the deer multiplied rapidly. Soon outstripping their food supply, the deer herds were decimated by starvation.

The cougars and most of the wolves are gone from the north woods. Humans can help fill the gap left by the extermination of these natural predators; hunting will be permitted in the national lakeshore in accordance with State regulations. It is hoped that cycles of population explosion and starvation, and depletion and recovery of food plants will be avoided.

On some of the islands where there are no deer, the forests and thickets have not been browsed, and shrubs such as hazelnut, ground hemlock, mountain-ash, and American yew often attain sizes larger than they normally do on the mainland.

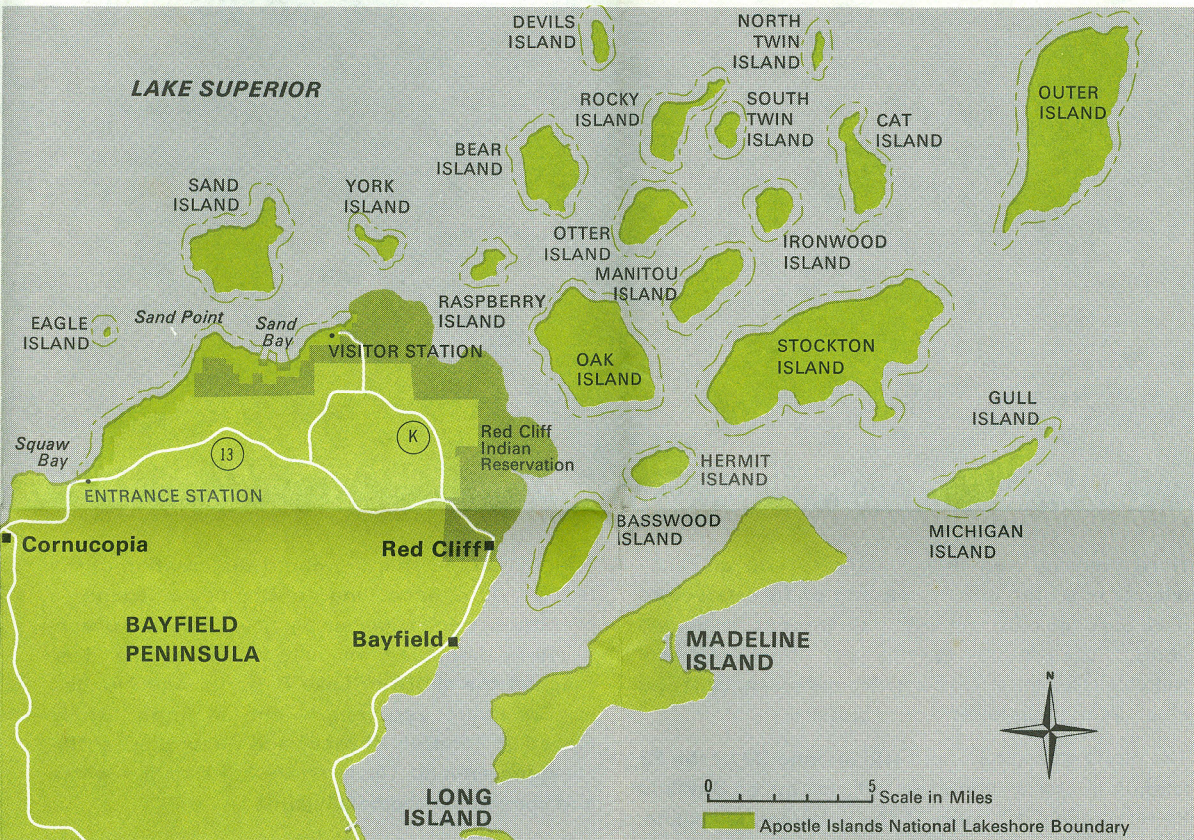
There is no lack of deer flies in the park. Persons who venture out in shorts and sleeveless shirts during parts of July and August may be annoyed by their painful bites.

Fishermen will be looking for bites of a different sort. While "deep sea" trolling for lake trout, they are frequently rewarded with specimens of startling size. One good trout may be enough for a family dinner.

#### WARNING—COLD WATER

Even in summer, Lake Superior waters are dangerously cold, because of their great depth and their northern sources. The temperature of the water a few hundred feet from the shore may be 50° or less—cold enough to cause a strong swimmer to drown in 15 minutes.

Because of the coldness and a lack of lifeguards, swimming is not recommended. On hot August afternoons hardy souls may be tempted to take a dip in shallow, protected bays where the water may be 10° or so warmer than it is in the open lake. Even this warmer water is chilly enough to rule out swimming as a pleasure for most persons.



#### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The hills, valleys, shoreline, lake, and varied plant and animal life make the park an ideal place for such recreational activities as hunting, fishing, camping, boating, hiking, nature study, photography, and beachcombing. Most of the park development is still in the planning stage. A visitor center, campgrounds, picnic areas, hiking trails, marinas, and boat ramps are contemplated. The National Park Service will conduct naturalist services, including nature walks, evening programs, interpretive boat trips, and exhibits. Feel free to talk with any National Park Service employee; he will be happy to tell you more about this fascinating place.

For those seeking solitude, simple primitive campsites will be located on some islands. Minimum docking facilities will be installed to provide access to the islands for exploration.

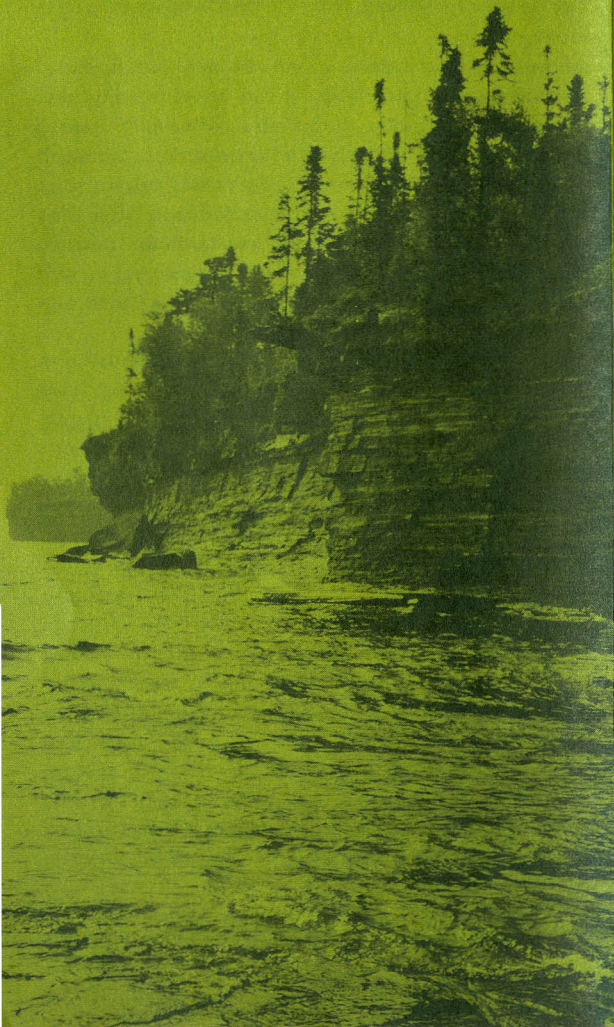
#### BOAT TRIPS

The only practical way of seeing or getting to the islands is by boat. For those without their own craft, a daily excursion is run out of Bayfield in summer. This trip, which lasts about 5 hours, includes a swing around Devils Island—weather permitting—for a good look at the sea caverns, pillared rocks, and rugged sandstone cliffs. A 2- to 2½-hour tour also is offered.

Boaters should be wary of rough water and sudden storms. They should refer to Lake Survey Chart 961, which may be obtained at stores in Bayfield.

#### VISITING THE CHIPPEWA TRIBE

The Red Cliff Indian Reservation complements the park. The tribe operates a number of visitor services and facilities at the village of Red Cliff, including campgrounds, boat ramps, charter fishing boats, and a guide service.



Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is 206 West Sixth Ave., Ashland, WI 54806, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so that each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

**National Park Service**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**