

Apostle Islands

National Lakeshore
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Basswood Island

Welcome

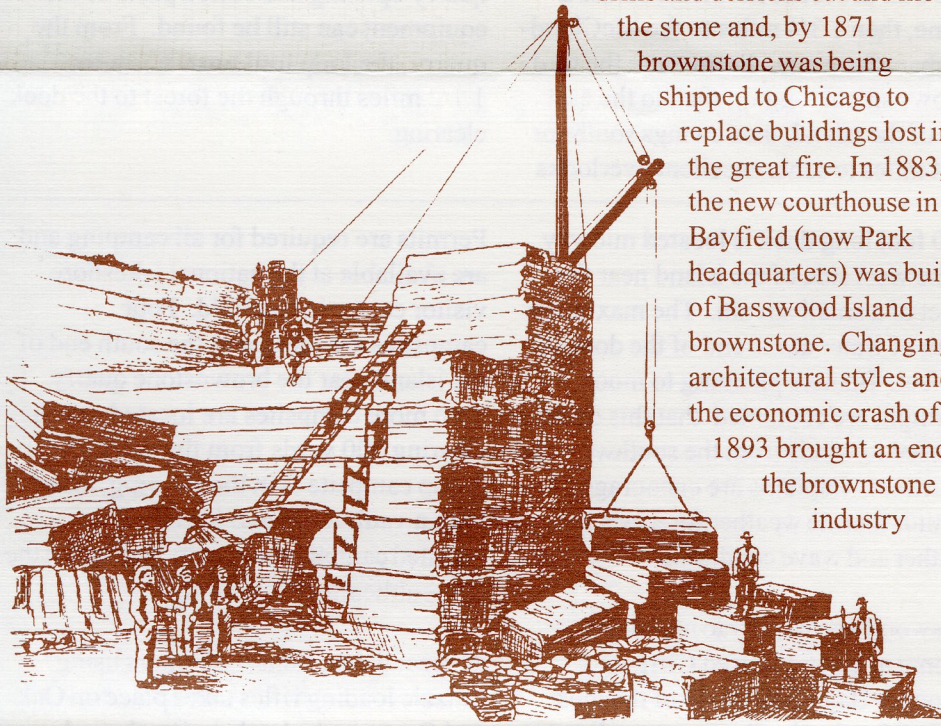
Basswood — an island so close and yet so far. Although the Bayfield Peninsula lies just over a mile away, visitors to Basswood Island, the Ojibwa's "Wigobic Miniss" are rewarded with the isolation and solitude of an island experience.

Low cliffs of brown sandstone or banks of broken stone and red clay meet Lake Superior along Basswood's shoreline.

An isolated sandstone block, called "Lone Rock" or "Honeymoon Rock" lies off the island's north tip. A dense growth of forest is broken only by several small clearings, the result of historic activities. The geology, the forests; and evidence of logging, quarrying, and farming are all vital components of Basswood's story - a story to be "read" by the observant island visitor.

Brownstone, Lumber, and Crops

The Lake Superior brownstone industry began in 1869 when sandstone from Basswood Island was selected for Milwaukee County's courthouse. Steam drills and derricks cut and moved the stone and, by 1871 brownstone was being shipped to Chicago to replace buildings lost in the great fire. In 1883, the new courthouse in Bayfield (now Park headquarters) was built of Basswood Island brownstone. Changing architectural styles and the economic crash of 1893 brought an end to the brownstone industry



Logging on Basswood Island began in conjunction with quarry activities and continued until the 1950s. Eastern hemlock, one of the first species harvested, was important to the leather industry. Two million board feet of white pine were harvested from the island's northeast side in the 1890s. In the 1940s, a small logging camp was located in what is now a campground near Basswood Island's dock. This operation harvested aspen and fir for pulpwood and yellow birch for veneer.

Several farmers have taken advantage of the island's extended growing season. The McCloud-Brigham farm, located in the north central portion of the island, was the largest. The McClouds produced corn, tomatoes, and squash for workers at the quarry in the early 1870s. In later years, the Brighams planted an orchard of apples and plums and brought cows to the farm. None of the five buildings once at the site remain standing.

Flora and Fauna

Basswood Island is cloaked in a northern hardwood/hemlock forest of red oak, sugar maple, quaking aspen, white and yellow birch, eastern hemlock, balsam fir, white cedar, red, and white pine. A few basswood trees are also present.

Because of the dense forest canopy, most flowers bloom in spring before the trees leaf out. Starflower, clintonia, Canada dogwood, rose twisted stalk, and dwarf ginseng are a few of the early varieties.

Basswood Island is home for a variety of wildlife. Beavers and otters visit the pond in the abandoned quarry. Red

squirrels are common. The island also supports a small population of white-tailed deer. A variety of habitats attract many of the 100+ bird species that nest in the Apostle Islands, including bald eagles. Special closures may be enacted to protect young eagles during the nesting season.

Much of Basswood Island is low and remains wet through spring into early summer, providing ideal conditions for mosquitos. Protective clothing and insect repellent are musts if one hopes to enjoy the sights of Basswood Island during this season.

Trails

A 5 1/2 mile loop trail begins and ends near a clearing up the hill from the dock. This trail proceeds northeast across a ravine, then 1 3/4 miles to the McCloud-Brigham farm site. From there the trail follows an old logging road to the east side of the island, then swings south for 2 1/4 miles to some excellent overlooks

of the main quarry area. Several large blocks of cut brownstone lie in the quarry opening and rusted parts of old equipment can still be found. From the quarry the loop trail turns north for 1 1/2 miles through the forest to the dock clearing.

Boating , Camping, and Hunting



A 70 foot long dock is located midway up the west side of the island near the outlet of a small stream. The maximum depth of water at the end of the dock is 4-6 feet. Boaters planning to moor overnight are cautioned that this dock is exposed to winds from the southwest and northwest. Captains are encouraged to monitor marine weather forecasts for weather and wave conditions.

Basswood's proximity to mainland harbors at Bayfield, Red Cliff, and Schooner Bay make it one of the most accessible islands. Persons traveling to the island in small boats, canoes or kayaks should pay attention to weather conditions and proceed with caution.

Permits are required for all camping and are available at the national lakeshore visitor center in Bayfield. Four campsites are located at the south end of the island near the brownstone quarry. Two more campsites are located near a clearing 200 yards from the dock. A group campsite is in the clearing, along with a vault toilet and a well. For detailed camping information, request the free publication, "Camping"

A special deer hunt for hunters using muzzle loading rifles takes place on Oak and Basswood islands in October. A limited number of permits are available. Contact Apostle Islands National Lakeshore's superintendent for details.

Island Ethics

Please help to preserve Basswood Island's beauty and ensure visitor safety. Keep fires in existing fire rings or grills when provided. Burn only dead, fallen wood. Be prepared to carry all refuse back to the mainland. Use pit toilets when provided; bury human waste when necessary. Do not feed bears or other wildlife. Keep your campsite clean and hang food between trees at least 10 feet off the ground. Pets must be leashed and constantly attended.

Please do not remove any artifacts from the island's historic sites. This is not only illegal, but deprives other visitors of the opportunity to experience them in their original setting. Thank you for helping to preserve Basswood Island's natural, scenic and historic values.

Printed from funds donated by Eastern National, a not-for-profit partner of the National Park Service.



Basswood Island

Island Dimensions

Length 3.5 miles

Width - 1.25 miles

Shoreline 7.75 miles

Size 1,917 acres

Elevation - 190 feet above Lake Superior

Key

..... Trail

▲ Campsites

▣ Group Campsite



North

