

WOLF'S EYE



Isle Royale Natural History Association Newsletter

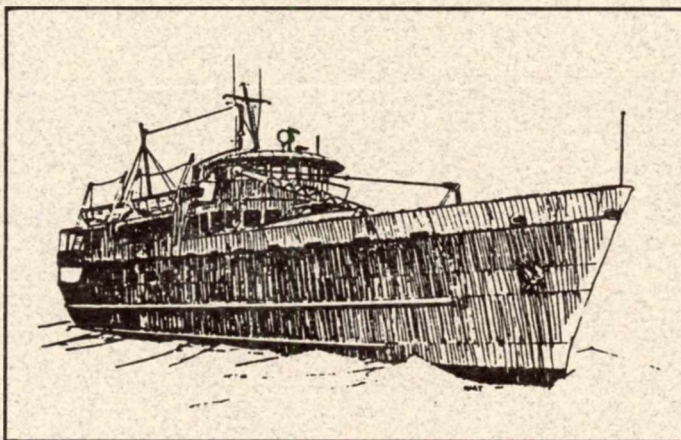
Spring 1990

From the Chairman

With the temperature hovering near zero, and a significant portion of our 200-plus inches of snow still on the ground, it is difficult to conjure up a spring note to IRNHA members. On the other hand, it is March, and I have heard radio announcements of the Ranger III schedule for trips to the island. Some days, the air has been somewhat "softer", and spring is surely not too far away.

The Board is looking forward to a spring meeting in May, part of our move to regular quarterly meetings. This change in policy is not without pain, especially for members such as Pat Johns, who must travel from the Twin Cities. However, I think everyone agrees that the more frequent meetings allow us to keep abreast of the dynamic affairs of the Association, and to contribute to continued operations in a meaningful way. Two meetings per year will simply not be enough any longer, with the financial and other responsibilities we face. The Association is pushing at a threshold of 700 members; our annual budget is approximately \$90,000; we provide a substantial service to the park in both direct monetary contributions and in support of interpretation. Even with a part-time business manager, part-time membership coordinator, and NPS coordinator, the Board needs to stay in close touch on a regular basis. The quarterly meetings also allow us to take care of business in a half-day session, rather than the former all-day marathons, a healthy change for all concerned.

Items discussed during the Board's winter meeting, held in February, included both bright and dreary outlooks. I've mentioned growth in memberships and a healthy income from sales of interpretive materials. I think that we can thank a judicious program of advertising for some of



the tripling of sales during the first quarter. We also welcome a new Corporate Sponsor, Pugh Oil Company. The Association is happy to report that Park Historian Tim Cochrane's small boat study has been funded and that we will be serving as fiscal agent for the project.

On the down side, we learned that Isle Royale National Park is suffering along with other units of the National Park Service from rather severe budget cuts. I will not attempt to specify the source or amounts of the cuts, but will assure you that the shortages will be felt. Stu Croll, Chief Ranger, informed us that serious cuts would be made in all programs: maintenance, administration, and interpretation. The cuts in interpretive programs will be particularly painful, from my perspective, since they will directly impact the visitors' appreciation of the island, but the cumulative effect of the overall cuts will have a tremendous negative effect on the park as a whole. I urge IRNHA members to contact your Congressmen and Senators to express disappointment about budget cuts in NPS programs.

Despite the negative aspect of this budget news, I am very happy to report that Stu

has found a way to restore funding for the interpretive position at the Edisen Fishery. This year we can expect to see a cultural demonstrator residing in the newly-reconstructed cabin, fishing in Rock Harbor, and presenting programs to visitors at the fishery on a regular basis. In my opinion, this is one of the most positive developments in park programs in the past 10 years; I hope that we will see and contribute to more developments of this sort in the future.

Look for an article on Isle Royale in the July edition of *Backpacker* magazine, written by Jeff Rennie, the author of *Isle Royale: Moods, Magic and Mystique*. The early summer issue of *Michigan History* magazine is scheduled to run a feature on the island, as well, with contributions by Tim Cochrane, Bruce Weber, Tony Carrell, and yours truly. Topics covered will include a photographic essay on cultural resources underwater, excerpts from an Isle Royale diary, an essay on island history, and one on copper mining.

Tim Cochrane will be the featured speaker at our Spring Membership Meeting at the Houghton Ramada Inn, 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 18. Join us to hear Tim speak about Isle Royale's Indian and missionary heritage. Also, mark July 29 in your calendars as the date of the Summer Membership Meeting at Rock Harbor Lodge. While we have not finalized our program as yet, the Planning Committee assures me that it will be a memorable one. We hope to see a record turnout.

--Pat Martin

William Fink Named Superintendent

William O. Fink, superintendent of Fort Necessity National Battlefield and Friendship Hill National Historic Site near Farmington, Pennsylvania, has been promoted to superintendent of Isle Royale National Park. A 19-year veteran of the National Park Service (NPS) "Bill" will report for his new assignment in April.

Bill is a native of Arlington, Virginia, and graduated in 1970 from the University of Denver in Colorado with a bachelor's degree in political science.

He began his NPS career as a seasonal park ranger at Greenbelt Park, Maryland. His first permanent assignment was with the Southern Arizona Group Office in Phoenix, Arizona, working with inner city Hispanic groups. Other park ranger assignments have included Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monuments in Arizona; Hawaii Volcanoes National Park,

Hawaii; and Homestead National Monument of America, Nebraska.

He succeeds Tom Hobbs, who recently transferred to Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in Maryland. Fink and his wife, Barry Elizabeth, have two daughters, Sara, 17, and Jennifer, 15.

Also transferring recently to the park were Larry Kangas, new West District Ranger, and Bill Black, new Administrative Officer. Larry and his wife Sue have four children, ages 2-10. Bill and his wife Judi have two children ages 8 and 11. The IRNHA welcomes all these folks to our beautiful national park.

Business Manager's Report

The first quarter of 1990 was very successful for the IRNHA, a 320% increase over last year. This was due to the pre-Christmas mailing of our 1990 Publications brochure and the excellent sales of our new sweat shirt. Next year we hope to have a new sweat shirt with a different design that will be a reminder of our concern for this wonderful park.

I have been previewing several new items for the coming year. We have selected several new children's books that delve into realms of wildlife and ecology, and there are several new books that will be on the market within the next year that will be of interest to our members and park visitors. I am also looking for a book on moose but so far have been unsuccessful in my search for an appropriate one. If anyone has come across a good book concerning moose, please let me know.

I would like to thank all our members that have renewed their memberships during the last two months. It's your timely and continued support that makes this organization possible.

--Gayle Pekkala

NOTES

- ☐ Brochures are available advertising our weeklong Isle Royale field seminars. Dr. Wendel Johnson of the University of Wisconsin/Marinette will lead "Ecology of Isle Royale", June 11-16, and Charles Eshbach will conduct his course in "Wilderness Photography", September 3-8. Both seminars have been well-received in past years, so write us soon if you or a friend want details about this educational opportunity.
- ☐ Two prehistoric pots recovered from waters within the park have recently been loaned to the Michigan Bureau of History for inclusion in a major exhibit on underwater archaeology in the new State Museum in Lansing. We encourage you to visit this marvelous new building and see the exhibit which runs April through November.
- ☐ An archaeological site discovered at the entrance to Washington Harbor has been radiocarbon dated to be 3440 years old--the first documented "Archaic" stage occupation site in the park. Cultural links appear to be with the northern Lake Superior shore, rather than with the Upper Peninsula. The results of the testing at this site allow researchers to include five less well known sites as probable Archaic sites since they share characteristics of elevation and artifact similarities. Thus, there are six occupation sites on the island dating between 2000 and 1000 BC.
- ☐ The Coast Guard has given the park a 25 year loan of the massive Rock of Ages lighthouse lens being displayed by the NPS at the Windigo Ranger Station. Unfortunately, the historic lens at Passage Island Lighthouse--which the NPS had hoped to display at Rock Harbor Lighthouse--has been taken from the park by the Coast Guard for use in a proposed new station at Hancock, Michigan.

Isle Royale Natural History Association

87 N. Ripley St., Houghton, MI 49931

A nonprofit membership organization that assists Isle Royale National Park by publishing and selling educational materials to park visitors. Gifts, bequests, memorials and memberships are U.S. tax deductible.

Membership Categories:

Single Membership \$5.00

Husband and Wife Membership \$8.00

*Supporting Membership \$35.00

*Life Membership \$150.00

**Corporate Sponsor \$1,000.00

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(Life memberships may be paid for in two annual installments of \$75.00 each)

*Includes a gift copy of Isle Royale--Moods, Magic and Mystique.

**Includes a premium gift of a beautifully framed photo of an Isle Royale scene (16"x20").

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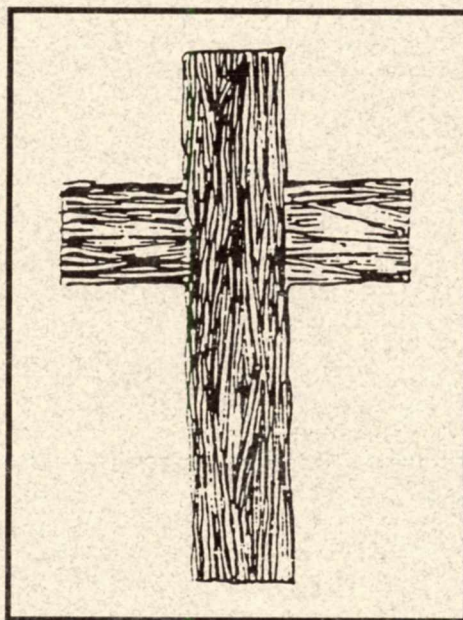
Isle Royale Missionaries

There is much to learn yet about Isle Royale's past. Information is squirreled away in obscure and remote archives, family albums, or carried tenuously in people's memories and stories, but occasionally we learn of some exciting episode of island history.

In the past months I have learned about one such episode: missionary work on Isle Royale in the 19th century. Efforts to spread Christianity to Ojibwa on the island extended to meet the religious desires of the white copper miners. At least five missionaries crossed the big lake to tend to their "heathens," "sheep," and "lonely miners."

Father Franz Pierz appears to be the first to voyage to "Ile Royal" in 1847 to baptize small groups of Ojibwa. Operating from a mission at Grand Portage and Pigeon River, Pierz followed the Ojibwa to the island to convert the "half-naked...wild beasts scattered in a desolate wilderness" to Roman Catholicism. Like other missionaries, Pierz sought to change the Ojibwa from nomadic hunters and gatherers into sedentary agriculturalists. He started an active program to have potatoes planted and harvested, which may have resulted in the coming of the potato to Isle Royale.

Pierz was succeeded by Father Nicholas Fremoit, who centered his work from the Mission of Immaculate Conception in what is now Thunder Bay, Ontario. Fremoit was a regular visitor to the island who sat passively in a birch bark



canoe while his "two savages" paddled furiously. Buffeted by heavy seas and wilderness conditions, Father Fremoit was relieved to conduct services for miners at "Tott's Harbor" and at the Siskowit Mine. In June, 1850, Fremoit describes meeting the Rock Harbor mine steward: "Mr. Bailey, steward of the mine, who seemed to me an excellent gentleman. I was invited to take tea with him at 6 o'clock; I accepted with gratitude. But I was not a little surprised to find myself conducted into a grand hall where mine-workers were waiting for us before sitting down to table. Mr. Bailey always eats with his people..." Fremoit's letters to his

superiors rail against the vast quantities of brandy sold to Indians on the island by illegal traders operating from ships.

Methodist missionaries also plied their craft among the same copper miners as Fremoit. William Benson made short forays to Rock Harbor from the south shore to tend protestant miners who had, out of necessity, worshipped with Fremoit.

But Catholic missionary work was pre-dominant. In the 1870s, during the making of fortunes from silver mining at Silver Islet near Thunder Bay, Father Baxter made regular rounds to the miners at McCargoe Cove. Jesuit Father Baxter was a distinctive figure with full white beard, black cassock, much-worn hat and numerous canvas bags and bundles slung over his shoulder. Baxter's endeavors ceased with the closing of the Minong Mine.

Missionary work accompanied the last mining phase on Isle Royale as well. A Captain Bundy, sailed his "bible boat" the Glad Tidings into Washington Harbor in 1892 to minister to the Wendigo Mine workers and families.

From the fierce pulpit pounding of Captain Bundy to the grim efforts to remake "savages" into model citizens, missionary work is a part of our island history. 19th century missionary efforts should remind us that much of Isle Royale history reflects regional patterns; occasionally observers have overemphasized island history as being distinctive from the mainland.

-- Tim Cochrane

WOLVES INCREASE

Scientists monitoring the wolf population at Isle Royale National Park counted 15 animals, a slight increase of the 11 counted last year. The annual winter monitoring conducted by Dr. Rolf Peterson of Michigan Technological University in Houghton, is sponsored by the National Park Service.

According to Resource Management Specialist Robert J. Krunenaker, a pair of adult wolves at the east end of the island have three pups with them this winter that were born last spring. Another wolf, which may be a pup, is with a male/female pair at

the west end of the island. In general, the population now consists of three groups that could potentially produce offspring this year, and four loners.

Wolves are very elusive and avoid human contact, and the researchers use an airplane and radio transmitter-collars to locate them. In the summer they are rarely seen, but in the winter (when the park is closed to all visitors), they can be tracked and observed from aircraft by the monitoring team. Hazardous flying conditions make even that difficult. This is the 32nd year of the Isle Royale winter study, and usually, the re-

searchers manage to count every wolf. Seven wolves have been radio-collared in the last two years which makes it possible for scientists to follow the movements of these individuals in the summer, too.

A lone female, which had been collared in 1989, was seen early in this year's study but soon after was found dead. "She killed a moose in the territory of an established pack, and when she was discovered by them, she was killed," Peterson said. She was found when her radio collar began transmitting in the "mortality mode",

continued...

WOLVES ...continued

which happens if a wolf is inactive for a lengthy period of time. By the time the research team found her she had been mostly eaten by foxes and ravens, but the researchers retrieved bones and tissues which will be a valuable part of the continuing study.

The moose population, principal food source of wolves, is currently at 1,200, plus or minus 200. Last year there were approximately 1,400 moose on the 210 square mile island.

The Isle Royale wolf study has always been followed closely by the public, especially in recent years when the population declined from a high of 50 animals to just 11 wolves within this decade. Various hypotheses were advanced to explain the wolf decline. These included insufficient food, disease, and genetics. Current genetic studies revealed that all island wolves tested to date are descendants from a single female. Thus, inbreeding more than any other single factor may be responsible for poor reproduction which in recent years has not kept pace with deaths. No wolves at Isle Royale are known to have died from March of last year until the wolf was killed in early February. This unusual lack of mortality led to the increase in wolf numbers this year. As mortality returns to normal levels, the wolf population at Isle Royale may still be in jeopardy.

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