

Wolff's Eye
Volume 4 Number 4
December 1960

ROCK HARBOR



Old Light

A Guide To Rock Harbor by Small Boat

"Rock Harbor is so large," someone once said, "that all of the ships of all of the navies in the world can be put into it at one time with room to spare." It has also been said of Rock Harbor that it is the largest and best natural harbor in all of the Great Lakes. . . . and, we might add, one of the least disturbed.

The gigantic navies of today's world **may or may not** fit into Rock Harbor at once — we really don't know. The statements, however, do describe Rock Harbor's size — about 15 miles long and up to a mile wide. In most places the water is safely deep up to within several yards of shore. It is little wonder that the earliest visitors to Isle Royale made Rock Harbor one of the major places of concentration, for it offers good protection from the occasional violent storms of Lake Superior.

There came to be several places of historic interest along Rock Harbor's shore, and many other places of biologic, geologic, or scenic interest. For years, folks learned of these places by word-of-mouth and some folks would even get to visit some of them. This little booklet is intended to be a guide for those who wish to visit in the Rock Harbor area — a guide to both the points of interest and to the navigation of the harbor.

In compiling this booklet we have made Rock Harbor Lodge "home base"; however, you may begin your trip at any point without difficulty. Each point of interest is preceded by a description of the route (and a map) to that point. The map is taken directly from the U. S. Lake Survey Chart #981. Helpful information has been added to aid you.

The length of time you spend on your trip around Rock Harbor will vary considerably, depending upon whether you stop at each point and upon how many side trips you may involve yourself in. To see everything might require 2 to 3 days, so if you have only 1 day you'll find it necessary to eliminate some points of interest. In any event it is hoped that you can take time to cover the entire route as given in the guide because we think you'll enjoy it — we hope so.

BEFORE YOU START.....

..... REMEMBER: If a stiff wind comes up or a fog blows in, get ashore. Have a compass and a map or lake chart with you. Have one life preserver for each person aboard, a fire extinguisher and some oars or paddles — just in case! Carry extra spark plugs and shear pins and know how to change them. Never overload your boat. Have correct running lights if you're going to be out after dark. Take it easy — you're on a VACATION; there's no substitute for common "horse sense"!



ROUTE TO STOP 1

Proceed from Snug Harbor at Rock Harbor Lodge in a south-westerly direction as shown on the above map. The first island that you pass will be on your left (southeast) and is known as Middle Island. You will be able to see Lone Tree Island to the southwest directly in line with Middle Island. You can also see that there are many rocks extending from Lone Tree Island toward Middle Island. These should be avoided. As you approach Lone Tree Island, stop your boat offshore and do NOT attempt to land on the island because swells of lake water can seriously damage your craft on the rocks.

STOP 1 — LONE TREE ISLAND

Lone Tree Island has been a landmark at Isle Royale for years. There are probably many small islands nearby with only one tree growing on them, but this one, being close to Rock Harbor Lodge, is the best known. Many jokes are made about Lone Tree — Isle Royale's only tavern and night spot is said to be located there with dances held every Saturday evening. The Postmaster at the Isle Royale National Park Post Office has received advertisements for the "Lone Tree Beauty Salon" each year now for about 5 years. And so it goes.

Research done on the tree itself was reported in the July 1957 issue of WOLF'S EYE. Reprinted here are several of the facts gleaned from that report:

Lone Tree:

- is a white spruce (*Picea glauca*)
- is 15 inches in diameter at the base
- is 11 inches in diameter at the 4-1/2 foot level
- is hollow at the base, solid at the 4-1/2 foot level
- is about 18-20 feet tall
- was 4-1/2 feet tall in 1867
- probably started from a seed about 1855-1860.

At its peak year (1880) Lone Tree grew 5/16 of an inch in diameter.

After 1901 the tree grew slower and slower until in the years 1925, 1926, 1927, and 1928 it grew only about 1/5 of one milli-

meter per year (one millimeter equals about 1/25th of an inch).

From 1901 until 1957 Lone Tree grew only 2-3/8 inches in diameter.



ROUTE TO STOP 2

On leaving Lone Tree Island, position yourself about midway between the island and the shore to your north — then proceed southwesterly again. Shortly you'll pass to the left of an island lying just offshore. This is Hawk Island; very small and bounded by rocks. After passing Hawk Island, a large gap between the islands on the harbor's southeast side allows you to see out over Lake Superior. On days when the lake is rough, swells may roll through this gap, making the harbor a bit choppy in this area. Past the gap you are again in the lee of the chain of islands to the southeast. Proceed according to the map above — staying about 100 feet or more from shore — until you come to a small dock on the shore of the main island. The dock is large enough to accommodate only one or two small boats.

STOP 2 — JUNCTION: MOUNT FRANKLIN AND ROCK HARBOR TRAILS

From the dock a trail leads both northeast and southwest. This is the Rock Harbor Trail. A short hike to the southwest brings you to the junction of the Mount Franklin Trail. If you like, and feel that you have the time to spare, hike up the trail a little way. You will be in splendid spruce-fir forest composed chiefly of white spruce, balsam fir and paper (or canoe) birch. If you are here early in the season (before July 10th) you may find the Calypso orchid growing in the dense shade of the forest. The trail leads eventually to the head of Tobin Harbor where it crosses Tobin Creek, thence to the summit of Mount Franklin on the Greenstone Ridge.

ROUTE TO STOPS 3 AND 4

Dead ahead as you leave the cantilever dock at Stop 2 and head southwest you will see a rather prominent point jutting out into Rock Harbor. There are many rocks around the point on its northeast side and the water is quite shallow, so head your boat well out into the harbor when rounding the point.

Running very slowly, you may get in close to the point for a better look at it. The name "Starvation Point" was given to this protrusion by Mike Johnson, longtime fisherman at Isle Royale, because any commercial fishing net placed off this point seemed to bring in starvation wages.



Directly across the harbor from Starvation Point you will see Mott Island, where Park headquarters is located. About 1 mile from Starvation Point, and directly across from the southwestern end of Mott Island, is a large, apparently man-made pile of rock right at the harbor's edge. This is Stop 4, and unless the harbor is quite rough you will be able to land a small boat on the sandy beach near the pile.

It is best to anchor one end of the boat offshore with an anchor (or a rock tied onto a long rope). In this way, the boat will not be washed ashore by wave action or by the wake of a passing boat whose skipper may not notice your boat. And remember always to tilt your outboard engine up when you are close to shore like this because if the lower unit should bang on the rocky bottom it might be damaged.

STOP 4 — SISKIWIT MINE LOCATION

The Siskiwit Mine was one of the first mines operated on Isle Royale by white men (about 1850). The operators were Charles Whittlesey (after whom Lake Whittlesey was named), John J. Senter (after whom Senter Point in Siskiwit Bay was named) and James Hubbard (about whom little is known). The word "Siskiwit" is from the Chippewa and has been spelled in a variety of ways — Ciscovet, Siskawit, Siskowet, or Siskowit. The present spelling is farthest from the original pronunciation, according to some authorities. The "o" in the second syllable is more correct. The very fatty lake trout — much more so than those purchased for eating — known as Siskowit is the origin of the name. It is understandable that many features of the Siskiwit Bay area would bear this name because great catches of these trout were once made there, but why the mine, 20 miles from the bay, should bear the name Siskiwit is a mystery unless the owners named their mine before coming to Isle Royale.

One of the mine shafts is quite near the harbor's edge, but many other shafts can be found throughout the area. BE VERY CAREFUL NOT TO STUMBLE INTO ONE OF THEM. The pile of rock on the water's edge is called "poor rock" — containing no copper but removed by the shaft digging. Fragments of the foundations of some old mine buildings can also be seen in the area. Like all the other copper mines on Isle Royale in fairly recent times, the Siskiwit Mine was financially unsuccessful and probably had closed down within 5 to 10 years after the beginning of operations.



Proceeding from the Siskiwit Mine Location to Stop 5 you will notice many islands and interesting features on the opposite side of Rock Harbor. These will be visited on the return trip. Continue southwestward staying 100 feet or more from shore. After passing Middle Islands Passage on the harbor's southwest side, the Daisy Farm Campground will be visible on the northwest shore. DO NOT head into the dock area until you are completely abreast of the docks, then head directly into them. Marked on the map above is an old dock in the "danger area". This is a remnant of a large CCC dock built in the 1930's and here and in the rest of the "danger area" are many submerged rocks — that is why it is wise to make a wide swing around the "danger area" until you are more familiar with the hazards.

STOP 5 — THE DAISY FARM CAMPGROUND

The "Daisy Farm" is the largest campground on Isle Royale, being especially suitable for (indeed, designed for) larger camper groups. Among the advantages to campers is the nearness to Park headquarters and help in case of emergency; the location on Rock Harbor, a well-protected body of water; and the relative abundance of trails leading from the camp.

Hundreds of years ago, Lake Superior was just slightly higher than at present. At that time a sand beach was formed about 200 feet from the present shoreline at the Daisy Farm. Today this very old sand beach can be seen as a slight rise in land (only a foot or two high) winding through the campground. If Indian peoples were present at that time this old sand beach (known in the Lake Superior region as the "Algoma" beach) would have seem-

ingly offered a good spot for pulling up their birch canoes. There is some evidence (broken pottery and flint chips, for example) that Indian people were here then and before. Because there is a comparatively fine beach and an extensive level area at the Daisy Farm, the site was probably an important one to the Indians until the time Isle Royale was ceded by the Chippewa to the United States in 1842.

About 1846, Leander Ransom, Superintendent of the Ohio and Isle Royale Mining Company, laid out a townsite at what is now the Daisy Farm. Little is known about the town, but it was named Ransom Townsite after its founder, and it was shown as such on many maps until very recent years.

During the early days of Rock Harbor Lodge, potatoes and other vegetables were grown at this site; the production of field daisies often exceeding the edible crop — hence the name "Daisy Farm". Again, during the 1930's, the site was utilized by the CCC as a camp area. Several buildings were erected — the last of them having been removed in 1957.



ROUTE TO STOPS 6 AND 7

About a mile southwest of Daisy Farm are two buoys in the middle of the harbor, one black and one red. Coming IN from the open lake it is the rule to keep RED buoys to the RIGHT and BLACK buoys to the LEFT. Since you are going farther away from the lake, the rule applies here and you will actually move BETWEEN the two markers. In many instances these warning devices pertain only to large ships, small craft being able to navigate on either side of the buoy. This is NOT the case here, however, since the water outside of the marked passage is VERY SHALLOW and a hazard to your underwater equipment. This is STOP 6.

Should you stop to look at the buoys at close range, please do not hang on or tie to them. Much of the body of the marker is below the surface. The bottom portion is filled with concrete as a stabilizing ballast. A heavy chain dangles loosely from the base and is attached to a concrete or stone anchor on the floor

of the harbor. Chances are that the buoys are larger, and certainly heavier than your boat. Any sudden action of the water could toss the buoy against your craft, or pull you from the boat if you are holding on. Only in an extreme emergency should you come along side or tie to one of the markers.

After you have passed between the buoys, stay in the center of the harbor until you have reached the noticeably wider basin-like southwestern end of Rock Harbor. This is Moskey Basin, named for a former employee of the Washington Office of the National Park Service. The water near the shores of the basin tends to be more shallow than elsewhere in Rock Harbor, so it would be advisable to maintain a fairly true course toward the end of the basin until you can see the dock. Then ease in. This is STOP 7.

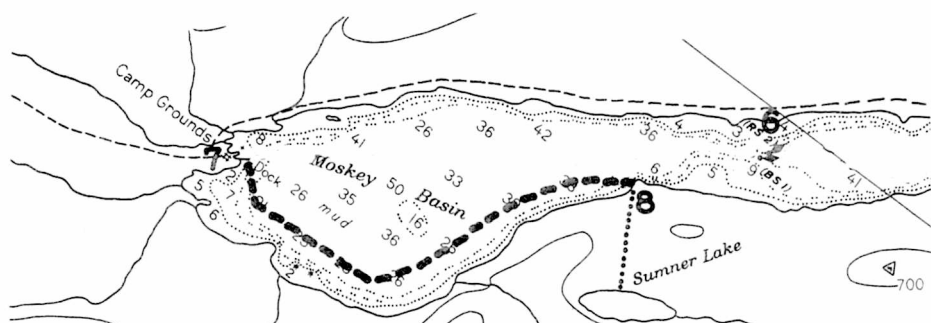
STOP 7 — MOSKEY BASIN LAKESIDE CAMP

You are now at the extreme southwest end (head) of Rock Harbor — about 10 miles from Rock Harbor Lodge. The campsite here is across the open rock area directly behind the dock. Tables and fireplaces are available if you care to prepare a meal or eat your picnic lunch. An outdoor toilet and an Isle Royale shelter are on a trail leading off to the left.

Two trails meet near the Moskey Basin Lakeside Camp. The trail from camp leads west, then north to a junction of the Rock Harbor Trail with the trail to Lake Richie. You may want to hike part or all of the trail to Lake Richie — a pleasant and easy 2 miles away. Lake Richie is noted for good pike fishing and scenic beauty.

ROUTE TO STOP 8

You may wish to start the return trip through Rock Harbor by staying close to the southeast side of Moskey Basin. There are a number of small inlets and some small islands in the basin worth exploring. Remember, though, there are also numerous shallow spots close to shore making it necessary to proceed with caution. STOP 8 is Baker's Point, a small point of land marking the entrance into Moskey Basin. The Point can be recognized by its low, sandy shoreline and by the beaver house on its northeast side. You will need to pull up your motor to get ashore.

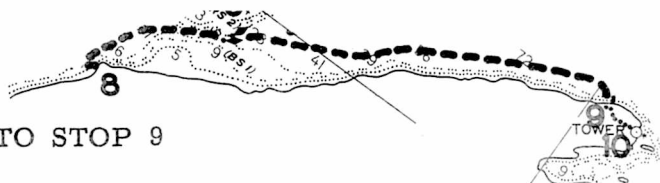


STOP 8 — BAKER'S POINT

Some years ago a fisherman lived on this point with his wife and young son. One day a neighboring fisherman came to call on the family. Hearing a muffled voice from the cabin, he entered and found the little boy alone, completely naked, and covered with flour from his mother's bin. Ever since that day the point has been called "Baker's Point".

The beaver house on the northeast side of the point may or may not be in use, but you will be able to get a close look at its unusual construction.

Less than a mile southeast of Baker's Point is Sumner Lake. There is no trail to the lake, and the going "cross country" is not easy. If you do go, however, you will find that the north side of the lake is one of the few places on Isle Royale where both white and red (Norway) pines grow. The trees are on a high bluff overlooking the lake. The bluff itself is a delightful spot. If you do decide to visit Sumner Lake, be SURE to take a compass so that you can find your way back.



ROUTE TO STOP 9

Upon leaving Baker's Point it will be necessary again to go to the center of the harbor, then northeastward between the two buoys. A mile and a half from the point, and near Middle Islands Passage on the southeast side of the harbor, you will pass the old commercial fishing operation of Jack Bangsund (now deceased). Shortly thereafter you will arrive at STOP 9, residence and commercial fishing base of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Edisen.

STOP 9 — THE EDISEN COMMERCIAL FISHING SITE

When Isle Royale became a National Park in 1940 commercial fishing on the island was represented by many families. Since that time some of the original fishing families have had to abandon their island homes because the fishery has been depleted in recent years by the sea lamprey. Several families do remain, however, and you will find them friendly and of high character. The Isle Royale fishery began many years ago but it did not take on commercial importance until the arrival of the white man. The earliest commercial fishing is not recorded so far as is known, but the late Fred Dustin in his "Isle Royale Place Names" printed in Michigan History, 1946, had this to say:

"American Fur Company Fishery. In section 7, Town 63, Range 39, opposite Double Island, and between Washington and Grace Harbors. Was probably established before the cession of Isle Royale by the Chippewa in 1842, as it had been abandoned for a long time when visited by Charles T. Jackson in 1847."

Several other American Fur Company Fishery sites were known to have existed at that same time.

The first building that you will see upon docking at the Edison home is the "fishhouse", situated directly ON the dock. Here the fish are brought in in boxes from the fishing boat and processed for shipment to the Duluth area fishery companies. The processing method varies considerably depending upon the kind of fish, the time of year, the current market, etc. A boat operated by one of the Duluth companies circumnavigates the island two or three times weekly to collect these fish.

The building directly behind the dock is the living quarters for the Edison's, and to the right of it is the nethouse where nets and other materials and supplies are stored.

If either Mr. or Mrs. Edison is at home and not busy when you arrive, they will be happy to answer questions about their operation. If they are busy, however, please be considerate — this is their livelihood.

STOP 10 — THE OLD ROCK HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE

The trail to the Old Lighthouse begins between the Edison house and the nethouse. It goes up the small hill in back of the home and winds through a delightful spruce-fir forest. You are at the Old Light almost before you realize it.

The trail emerges into a clearing surrounding the Old Light building. At the present writing (1961) the structure is in a bad state and should not be entered. When contemplated restoration is completed, you may once more climb the tower stairs and look out upon the beautiful passage below.

The known history of the Old Light is scanty. It was the first lighthouse built on Isle Royale, presumably about 1855. At that time ships were coming into Rock Harbor in connection with the copper being mined there and elsewhere on the island. The Old Light was abandoned by the Government before 1900 and for a number of years the residence at the foot of the tower was lived in and cared for by a fisherman's family. The building has been completely abandoned for more than 15 years.

The small beach near the Old Light is a good place to just relax into whatever mood the lake happens to have — placid, calm, stirring, or violent. Whatever the mood, you'll probably acquire it.



ROUTE TO STOP 11

As you leave the Edison dock, be sure to look at the rock cliff just to the northeast. As seen from the side the cliff resembles the face of an Indian — especially if the sun is in the west casting a red-gold hue against the rock surface. Nicknamed "The Great Indian Head", the feature was immortalized in a poem, "Guardian of the Isle" published in 1928 by Louis O. Broadwell.

The route plotted on the map takes you OUT of Rock Harbor briefly. Be careful to follow the channel as indicated. To your right as you sail through Middle Islands Passage will be the Old Light and then a small island. When abreast of the island, turn almost full left toward the other side of the passage. As you approach Burnt Island, the outermost in the cluster in the passage, you'll see a RED buoy marking the channel. Keeping the red

buoy on YOUR RIGHT and the two black buoys on YOUR LEFT you will again enter Rock Harbor (refer frequently to the above map). The first stop after entering the harbor is at the dock on West Caribou Island, one-eighth mile northeast of the passage.

STOP 11 — CARIBOU ISLAND

When Isle Royale National Park was in the "project" stage, before 1940, the temporary headquarters was located at this point. The area was not adequate for future development, however, and the headquarters was moved to its present location on Mott Island.

The lakeside camp here on Caribou consists of two Isle Royale shelters, tables, fireplaces, and toilets. The trail along the north edge of the island leads to the point at Middle Islands Passage where there is an automatic navigation light and a foghorn. The foghorn must be manually operated whenever there are ships coming through the passage during a fog.



ROUTE TO STOP 12

Cemetery Island is not far from the Caribou Island dock. If you have an inboard engine, you'll have to be very careful about how you navigate, but with an outboard tilted up there will be no trouble rowing or paddling to the spot indicated on the above map. Anchor or pull your boat out of the water and take the short trail.

STOP 12 — CEMETERY ISLAND

Mr. Dustin, in his Isle Royale Place Names, said of Cemetery Island:

"A small conical island north of the south-westerly end of Lower Caribou Island, and separated from it by a shallow channel. It takes its name from having been used as a burial place during the mining operations of the fifties. There are a number of graves on the crest marked by wooden headboards and surrounded by a fence. Two or three of the inscriptions are memorials of some who had crossed the sea only to find wilderness graves."

A few of the headboards may still be read. This is because the inscriptions apparently were made by painting the entire board white and then putting the lettering on in black. Over the years the white paint "weathered" much more rapidly than the black, and as it disappeared, the wood under it also weathered, leaving the letters, protected by the superior black paint, standing out in relief. Two of the headboards have been removed and placed in protective storage until a museum is established at the park.

ROUTE TO STOP 13



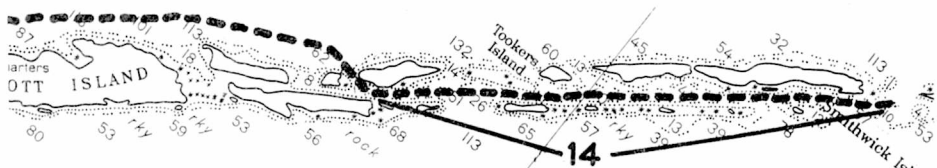
Row or paddle from Cemetery Island toward the center of Rock Harbor until the water becomes deep enough to lower your out-board engine. Proceed well out toward the center of the harbor to the Mott Island headquarters dock.

STOP 13 — MOTT ISLAND HEADQUARTERS

During the fall of 1845 the brig **ASTOR** was wrecked and could not make the trip to Isle Royale with supplies. Charley Mott and his wife, Angelique, were settled for the winter on what is now called Mott Island, but without the supplies the **ASTOR** was to bring, their food was soon entirely gone. Charley died in mid-winter and Angelique claimed she buried him in the spring. Angelique, of Indian stock, was apparently well-versed in living-off-the-land because she was able to snare enough snowshoe hares to subsist for the remainder of the winter. Mott Island was named, of course, for Charley and Angelique. Near the southwest end of Mott Island is a ring of stones, grown over with brush. This could be the marker that Angelique placed over Charley's grave, but this possibility has not been investigated.

ROUTE TO STOP 14

As you leave the Mott Island dock, proceed northeast past Starvation Point to your left. At the northeast end of Mott Island you will be able to see Lake Superior through a gap in the island chain. This gap is studded with rocks, so it's wise not to enter it. The next islands to the northeast are Inner Hill Island and the smaller Star Island. Davidson Island, distinguished by a house and dock, is across the narrow channel from Star Island. You may continue to the northeast either in Rock Harbor or through the channel between Star and Davidson Islands staying



close to the Davidson Island side. As you can see on the above map there are actually two chains of islands in this section with the narrow channel called "Lorelei Lane" between them. If you choose to go through the Lane, **REDUCE YOUR SPEED** because the channel is narrow with dangerous rocks on either side. If you stay in the approximate center of the lane, you should have little or no trouble.

STOP 14 — LORELEI LANE

This is not actually a stop unless, of course, you wish to do so. The large house visible on Davidson Island is on the site of a summer resort once operated by a man named Johnson. Several of the cottages and small buildings built by Johnson were moved to Rock Harbor Lodge in the 1920's. In 1924, William Davidson, for whom the island is named, built the present house. For some years after Isle Royale became a National Park, Dr. and Mrs. Frank Clay lived there, leasing the home on an annual basis. Dr. Clay is remembered fondly by many island residents as the man who unofficially attended their ills and often rendered life-saving first aid. The Davidson Island house is now the residence of the Park Naturalist and provides space for the Park's photo lab and publications office.

The trip through Lorelei Lane will give you an opportunity to see one of the best water and island views in the Park. This is the sort of scenery that makes Isle Royale comparable in beauty to any spot on Earth. After you pass Davidson Island, Lake Superior will be directly to your right. If it seems rough, turn back and reenter Rock Harbor — it's best to take no chances. If the lake is not rough, continue through the lane. As you approach the first island on your right across the gap from Outer Hill Island, steer close in because a shallow reef lies on the north side of the lane at this point.

About 2 miles from Davidson Island the lane ends at Smithwick Channel, directly across from Rock Harbor Lodge. Straight ahead is Raspberry Island. To get into Rock Harbor again, stay close to Raspberry Island where the water is free from reefs and rocks (refer to the map).

ROUTE TO STOP 15



Back in Rock Harbor, the route takes you along the shore of Raspberry Island. The shoreline is a series of alternating rocky bluffs and gravel beaches. Anchor out or pull your boat up on the second or third gravel beach for STOP 15.

STOP 15 — RASPBERRY ISLAND

When you have secured your boat, get out the insect repellent and apply it generously — you'll need it. Then hike straight inland from the beach. There is no trail and the going is soggy, so it's boots or wet feet. In no time at all you will come out upon Raspberry Island Bog.

As you stand at the edge of the bog, think back to Lorelei Lane as a passage between two chains of islands. What you see before you is actually a continuation of that pattern — or it would be if the water passage had not been blocked at either end by a land mass to form a long narrow basin. The evolution of that basin into a bog makes an interesting story.

A lake apparently formed in the basin, with vegetation of several types growing in the water. There was no outlet, so the decaying plant material caused the water to become acidified. The acid water arrested the growth of certain plants while furthering the growth of others, among them sphagnum moss. The moss grew prolifically around the edges of the lake and its dead branches, together with leaves, branches and pollen from nearby trees fell to the bottom. The acid in the water seems to have somewhat preserved the moss and the pollen, which collected in layers, gradually filling-in the lake.

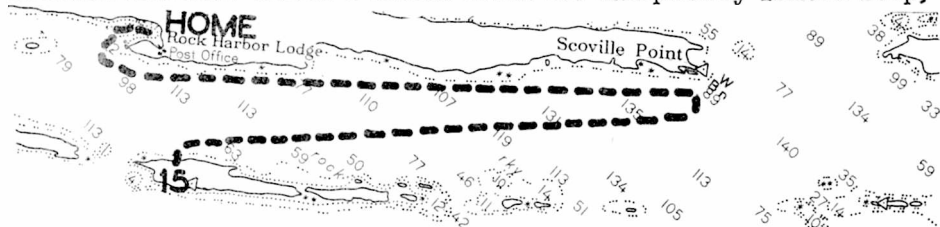
Samplings taken from the bottoms of several bogs on Isle Royale during the 1940's by the late Dr. J. E. Potzger led to several interesting conclusions. For example, the bogs at higher levels were formed earlier than those at lower levels, such as Raspberry Island Bog. This further substantiates other evidence that the level of Lake Superior was much higher at one time. Identification of the pollen that fell into the lake at various levels of the build-up also permits a determination of the changes in forest types that have taken place over the years. And because the forest types are an expression of the prevailing climate, it is

possible to know with a fair degree of accuracy what the climatic conditions have been on Isle Royale in the last 9 to 10 thousand years.

Dr. Potzger's research shows that spruce and fir were the most common trees on Isle Royale after the glaciers had receded from the Lake Superior region. This would denote a period of cool temperatures and moist air. Several thousand years later, pine, oak, maple, and hickory were predominant, evidence of a warm and dry period. Then a few thousand years ago, the climatic pendulum swung back into an era of coolness and moistness and the spruce and fir came back as the major type of forest on Isle Royale. Some hardwoods still grow on the island, but these are found only in the warmer, drier uplands.

ROUTE TO HOME

This is the last leg of your Rock Harbor trip. You may return directly to Rock Harbor Lodge or, if you have time remaining you may wish to go on along the island chain nearer to the end of Rock Harbor. About 2 miles from the Raspberry Island stop,



the end of Scoville Point appears on the north side of the harbor. There is a "day marker" (a white painted target) on the point to serve as a navigation aid identifying the point. Scoville Point is also reached by the Albert Stoll, Jr. Memorial Trail which begins at Rock Harbor Lodge. Should you wish to hike this trail later be sure to obtain a copy of the trail guide which explains features found along the trail.

From the water near Scoville Point you can see the islands forming the northeast end of Rock Harbor. On a very clear day you can also see Gull Islands appearing like little "blobs" on the horizon 10 miles northeast of Isle Royale.

Rock Harbor Lodge is now only 2 miles to the southwest. There are a few places along the shore where rocks and reefs jut out into the harbor, so it's best to stay well out in the harbor on your return to the lodge.

HOME — ROCK HARBOR LODGE

The following is reprinted from MEMOIRS OF A PIONEER and tells of the discovery of Snug Harbor by "Commodore" Kneut Kneutson:

"In the summer of the year 1901, in a desperate effort to overcome an exceedingly distressing case of hayfever, and the attending asthma, I set sail from Duluth on a Booth Line steamer for Isle Royale, where we arrived at noon the second day. This twenty-six hour water trip had improved my hayfever trouble very materially and it was in a high spirit of encouragement that I left the steamer and took up quarters with a fisherman by the name of Gus Matson, at Tobin Harbor, where I had a comfortable bed and good meals. The fresh, pure air of Isle Royale dispelled my hayfever trouble entirely in a couple of days and of course Isle Royale was heaven to me.

"I inquired of Mr. Matson where I could find the Isle Royale GreenStones, and he directed me to Mott Island on Rock Harbor about six miles from Scoville's Point. I convinced Mr. Matson of my sailorship and he equipped me with a small sailboat. With a vigorous northeaster, I had a fine six mile sail to the inner beach of Mott Island, as per directions. I took the path leading across the island to the GreenStone beach. I had taken my noon-day lunch at Matson's, expecting to be back for a six o'clock dinner.

"The fresh lake breeze was a fine brand of good medicine for me and I was in no hurry to leave the Green Stone beach. I gathered a fine lot of Green Stone specimens, beach-polished by the waves and contact with the coarse sand and gravel. I had given too little heed to the wind increase, but when late in the afternoon I walked back over the island to my sailboat, I found both wind and wave quite aggressive and setting in strong from the northeast. It would be impossible for me to row the boat against the wind and my only alternative was to tack zigzag, to and fro, across Rock Harbor gaining what points I could at every tack. Then I discovered that my boat was lacking in keel surface and I drifted and lost ground that I otherwise would have gained with proper keel equipment or centerboard. By dusk, I had worked my way down the harbor about 4 miles, when I tacked from the mainland over to the east end of Smithwick Island (now known as Greenstone Island). The wind was increasing, and the heavy wash coming through the Smithwick channel came near being my undoing filling my little boat with a quantity of water

that made it too logy for sailing, nor had I any opportunity for bailing. I saw that I could not sail past the Smithwick gap under the present wind condition and I headed for the mainland intending to strike some favorable spot and jump for it, expecting to lose the boat.

"Looking at the mainland from Smithwick gap, the shore appeared to be one straight line, but fortunately the boat passed just a short distance outside the point where the Lodge steamer dock now stands and to my great surprise and relief I found myself in the quiet water of the little bay, which I named Snug-Harbor and where I later built "Rock Harbor Lodge". In the quiet water I could row the boat to shore, then I worked my way in the darkness through bramble and over rocky places to the Tobin Harbor fishing station, where I arrived at about 11 o'clock, much to the relief of the whole camp. I found that some of the fishermen had the conviction that I could not sail that boat past Smithwick gap and around Scoville's Point and that I might possibly be lost.

"Gus Matson asked my whether I lost the boat and I described my tangle with the waves at the Smithwick gap, my boat being dangerously filled. I told him how I headed for the mainland intending, when I struck shore, to jump for it and that most fortunately I sailed into a little quiet harbor where I tied the boat, then made my overland trek. He smiled and said, 'that is one of the prettiest spots on Isle Royale.' In due time, I purchased a mile of Rock Harbor front embracing Snug Harbor."

From the Commodore's daughter, Mrs. Bertha Farmer of Madison, Wisconsin, comes the following, a quotation from her letter of January 25, 1960, to the Superintendent of Isle Royale National Park:

"As I was married in June 1902, the year following father's 'discovery of Snug Harbor', I was not personally identified with those early years, though my younger sister was. My only brother, then in his teens, is no longer living. He was the one who helped father most in the construction days when the first buildings were erected, and the community life of Park Place (this was the name given by the Commodore to the resort) took shape. Father was always enterprising, and he felt that since his hay fever seemed to exile him from his usual activities, and because he fell deeply in love with Isle Royale, he promptly shaped his affairs so that he could take his family to Isle Royale early every summer and stay late. My mother also fell in love with Isle Royale and was his loyal helper through the early constructive

years. His first move, of course, was to acquire enough land to make a start, and then, as he found many people interested, he later added to his original purpose and finally platted a section to sell for lots for summer cottages. The first years, the family lived in tents, and one of his first enterprises was to build a large log house which stood where the present dining room is, and which housed a dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms. Unfortunately this burned down some years later.

"As the years went by, father's acute hay fever abated considerably, perhaps because of the years he had spent immune from it, and probably, too, because he became very much interested in an insurance company which he had formed and which proved quite successful. The little business he had developed at Park Place was put in the hands of various managers, none of which worked out satisfactorily. During the years of the First World War, the place was closed, though the family continued to spend summers there. Finally in 1922, he asked me to assume the management. My family was by this time old enough so I could take them with me, and as my husband was a salesman who always made long trips in the summer time, I decided to try. At that time, the name of the place was changed to Rock Harbor Lodge (for better or worse?) and I continued as manager for twenty happy years."

The words of Commodore Kneutson and of Mrs. Farmer have brought the pioneering era of the Rock Harbor Lodge area very close — much closer than we could have brought it by putting the story in our own words.

It is the hope of all of us at Isle Royale that you have had an interesting and pleasant trip around Rock Harbor. If the experience leads you to explore other places at Isle Royale National Park, we trust that you will remember our explanations of the hazards of navigation and will use them again.

by Robert M. Linn, Chief Park Naturalist



MISSION 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.



Published by the Isle Royale Natural History Association in cooperation with Isle Royale National Park. Printed in The United States of America by the Association's Wolf's Eye Press.