

---

National Park Service  
Cultural Landscapes Inventory  
1999



Rocky Island Fishing/Summer Community  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

---

---

## **Table of Contents**

Inventory Unit Summary & Site Plan

Concurrence Status

Geographic Information and Location Map

Management Information

National Register Information

Chronology & Physical History

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Condition

Treatment

Bibliography & Supplemental Information

---

## Inventory Unit Summary & Site Plan

### Inventory Summary

#### The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

##### CLI General Information:

##### Purpose and Goals of the CLI

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI), a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the national park system, is one of the most ambitious initiatives of the National Park Service (NPS) Park Cultural Landscapes Program. The CLI is an evaluated inventory of all landscapes having historical significance that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources through a public planning process and in which the NPS has or plans to acquire any legal interest. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into a national database. In addition, for landscapes that are not currently listed on the National Register and/or do not have adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer or the Keeper of the National Register.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures, assists the NPS in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2006), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that respond to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two GPRA goals are associated with the CLI: bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (Goal 1a7) and increasing the number of CLI records that have complete, accurate, and reliable information (Goal 1b2B).

##### Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is gathered from existing secondary sources found in park libraries and archives and at NPS regional offices and centers, as well as through on-site reconnaissance of the existing landscape. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in context of the site's overall significance. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features, and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's overall integrity and an assessment of the landscape's overall condition. The CLI also provides an illustrative site plan that indicates major features within the inventory unit. Unlike cultural landscape reports, the CLI does not provide management recommendations or

treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape.

### **Inventory Unit Description:**

Rocky Island is located within the boundaries of Wisconsin's Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The Apostle Islands are situated northeast of the Bayfield Peninsula, and along the southwestern shore of Lake Superior. Rocky Island is a 1,100 acre, dipper shaped landmass that is north-centrally located within the archipelago. The historic district follows the eastern shoreline of Rocky Island, where the island's fish camps were located. Rocky Island is part of LaPointe Township, in Ashland County.

While Rocky Island has exposed bedrock outcrops along its northern shore, the island's name is derived from the cobbles and pebbles that line the southernmost and northernmost portions of the islands. Rocky Island's western shoreline, exposed to Lake Superior's winds and waves, has sheer bluffs. The Chequamegon Sandstone bedrock that underlies the island is covered mostly with glacial till. Geological evidence indicates that Rocky Island and its eastern neighbor, South Twin Island, were a single island at one time, with a deep bay along its southern end. Today, the water between the northern portions of these two islands is still less than ten feet in some places. Rocky Island's fish camps were located along the eastern shore, where it is protected from the harsh lake winds and waves by the remains of the bay it shares with South Twin Island.

The Rocky Island Historic District encompasses a complex of dwellings and related structures along the eastern shoreline of Rocky Island, within the Apostle Islands archipelago. Although now owned by the U.S. National Park Service, the properties are, or have recently been, occupied by the families and descendants of Norwegian-American commercial fishermen who established the small cluster of fish camps in the early 1930s.

After only a few years, the dominant use of Rocky Island began to shift from the commercial fishery that had supported the immigrant families to the tourism/recreation emphasis that characterizes the region today. This change accelerated in the decade following World War II, as the parasitic lamprey entered Lake Superior and depleted its fish populations. Though a minimal level of commercial fishing continues to take place, the shift in primary focus to recreational use was essentially complete by 1958.

This shift mirrored in microcosm a larger transformation of the northern Wisconsin economy from a resource extraction base to a tourism and recreation base. However, with the establishment of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in 1970, followed closely by federal acquisition of the properties, further development of the island was halted. The island residents, retaining use-and-occupancy agreements, maintained conditions essentially unchanged from those existing in the last years of the commercial fishing era.

The most significant, character-defining features of the Rocky Island Historic District are the fish camps. They are clusters of small, relatively easily transportable structures, seasonably occupied by the commercial fishermen and their families. The nucleus of the settlement was formed when several families moved their operations, buildings and all, from neighboring South Twin Island after a dispute with the island's land owner. Subsequently, several moved one or more times on the island. The five sites that comprise the historic district are the Hadland Fish Camp, the Benson Fish Camp, the Edwards Fish Camp, the Nelson Fish Camp, and the Erickson Fish Camp. The properties are arrayed along the

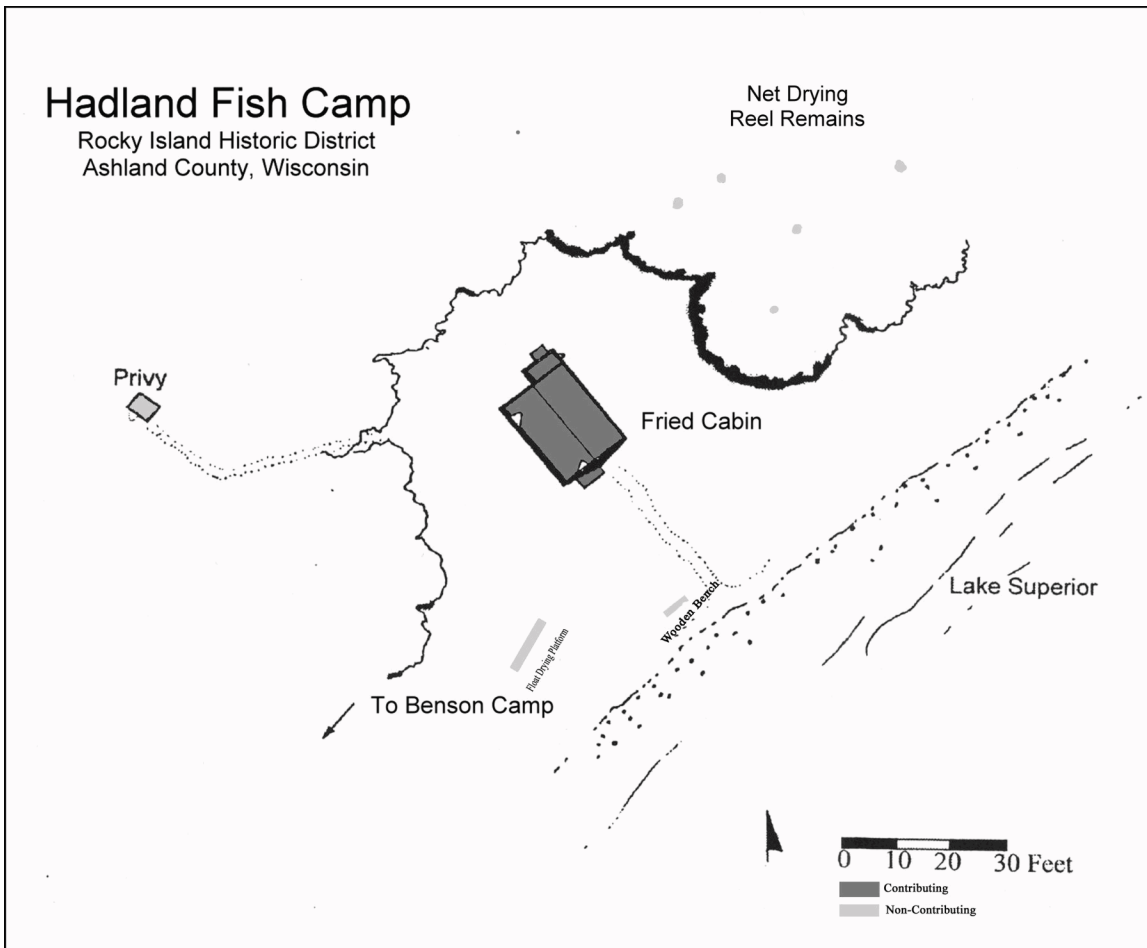
## Rocky Island Fishing/Summer Community

### Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

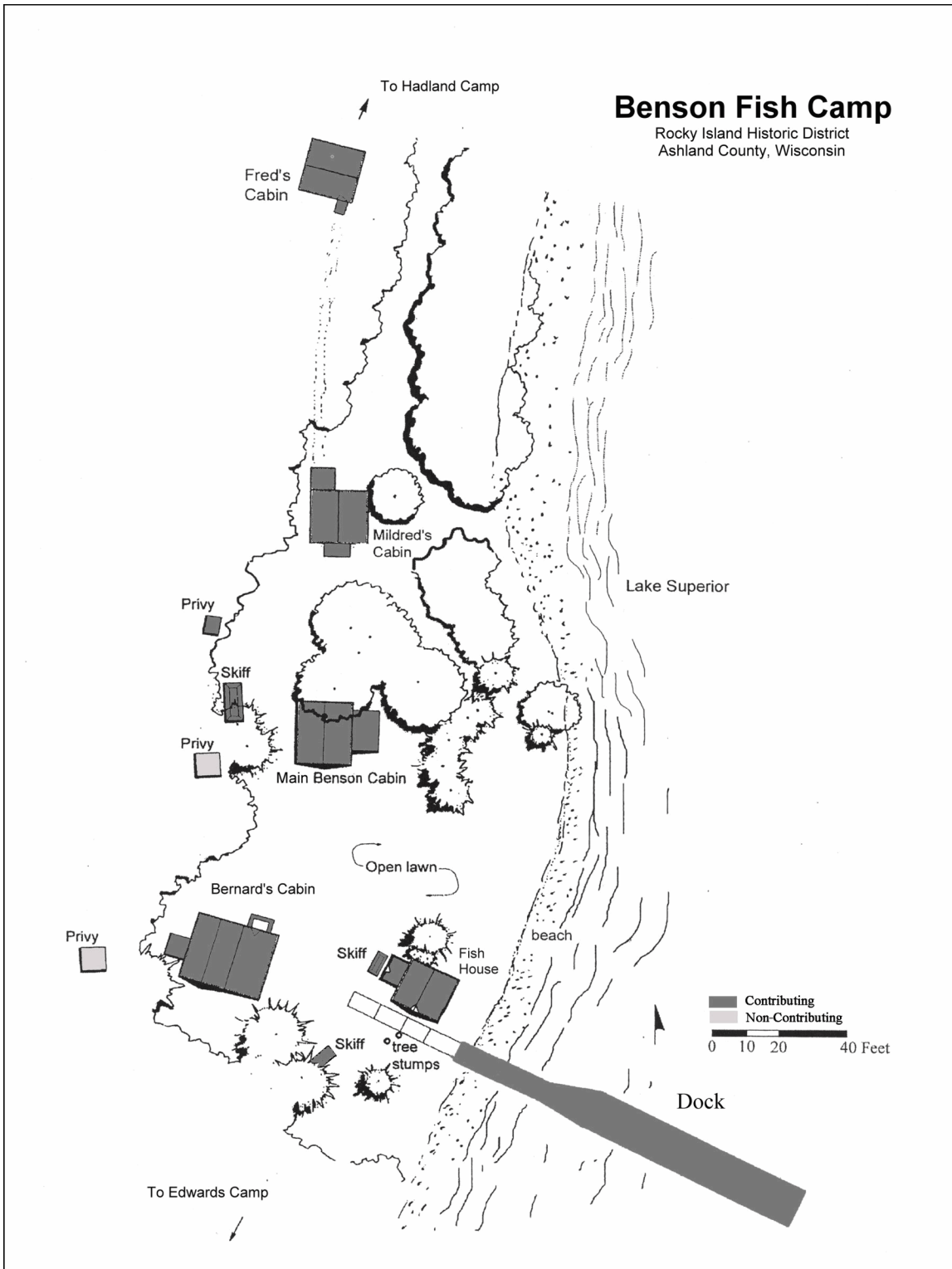
---

eastern shoreline of the island. The Hadland Fish Camp was individually entered into the National Register in 1977, and the district as a whole was entered on July 3, 2008.

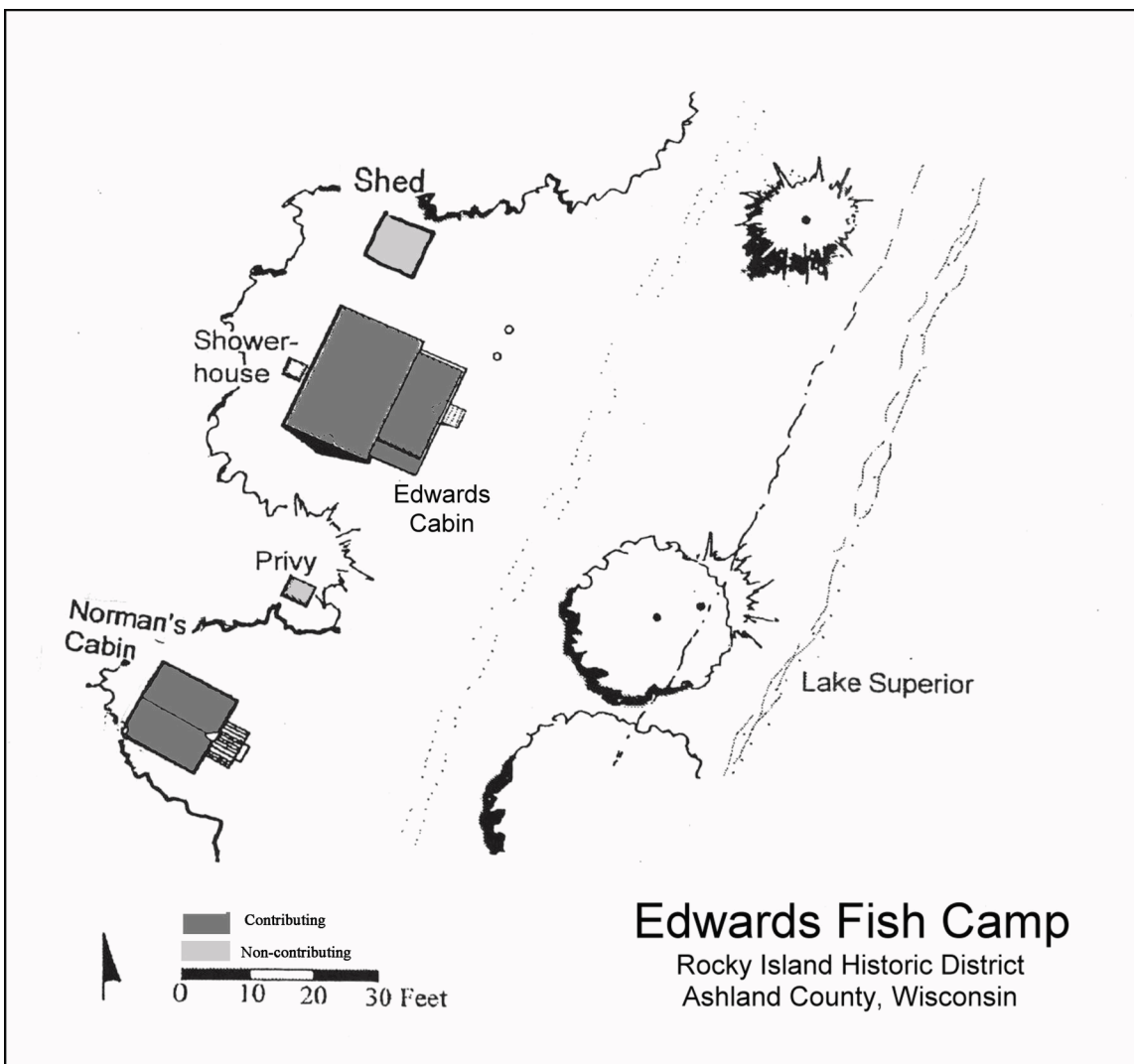
## Site Plan



*Hadland Fish Camp Site Plan*

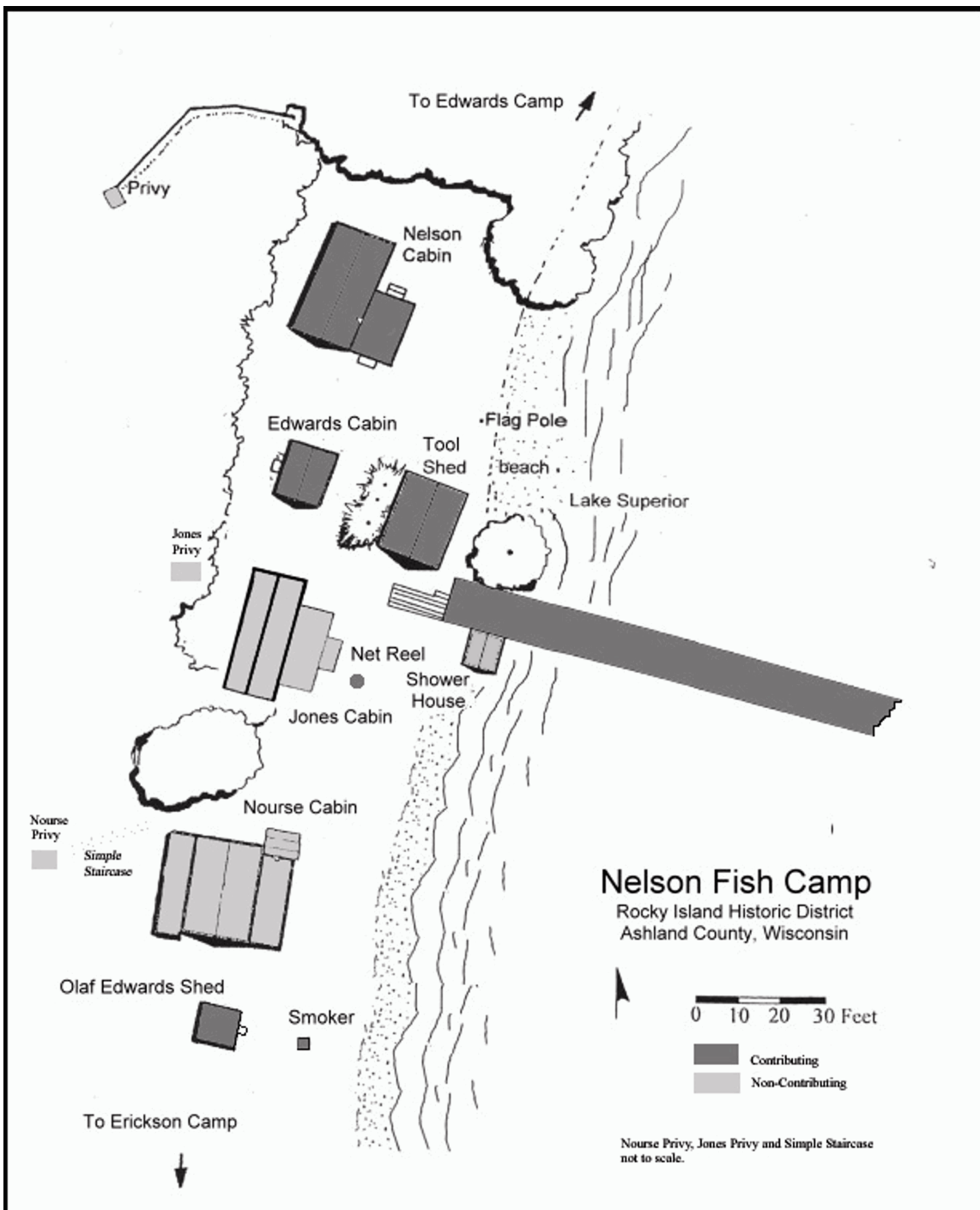


*Benson Fish Camp Site Plan*

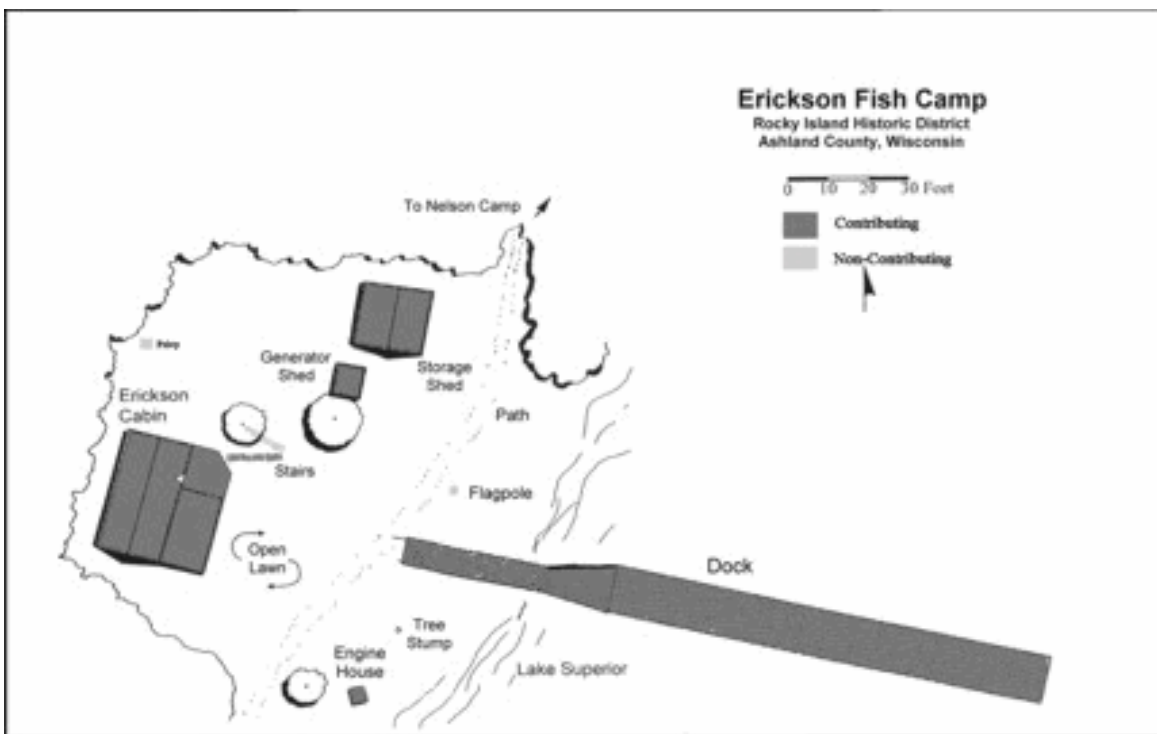


*Edwards Fish Camp Site Plan*





*Nelson Fish Camp Site Plan*



*Erickson Fish Camp Site Plan*

### Property Level and CLI Numbers

<b>Inventory Unit Name:</b>	Rocky Island Fishing/Summer Community
<b>Property Level:</b>	Landscape
<b>CLI Identification Number:</b>	500826
<b>Parent Landscape:</b>	500826

### Park Information

<b>Park Name and Alpha Code:</b>	Apostle Islands National Lakeshore -APIS
<b>Park Organization Code:</b>	6140
<b>Park Administrative Unit:</b>	Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

### CLI Hierarchy Description

Five sites comprise the Rocky Island Historic District: the Hadland Fish Camp, the Benson Fish Camp, the Edwards Fish Camp, the Nelson Fish Camp, and the Erickson Fish Camp. The properties are arrayed along the eastern shoreline of the island.

## Concurrence Status

**Inventory Status:** Complete

### Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

Initial research on the total number of landscapes was conducted by seasonals Kathleen Fitzgerald and Richard Radford during FY99 and determined that the number of landscapes for the park which were presented in the CLI at that time were correct. Former Cultural Landscapes Program Leader Sherda Williams and Historical Landscape Architect Marla McEnaney reviewed the landscape hierarchy presented in CLI. Data entry was completed by Dan Jackson in 2008 from a National Register District Nomination which was finalized by Christy Baker.

### Concurrence Status:

<b>Park Superintendent Concurrence:</b>	Yes
<b>Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence:</b>	07/22/2009
<b>National Register Concurrence:</b>	Eligible -- Keeper
<b>Date of Concurrence Determination:</b>	07/03/2008

### Concurrence Graphic Information:



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore  
415 Washington Avenue  
Bayfield, Wisconsin 54814-4809

July 22, 2009

H3023

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Midwest Region  
From: Acting Superintendent, Apostle Islands  
Subject: CLI Review for Rocky Island Fishing/Summer Community and Raspberry Island Light Station

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Cultural Resource Specialist, Christy Baker has reviewed the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Raspberry Island Light Station and Rocky Island Fishing/Summer Community. I concur and approve the content of the reports.

If there are any questions regarding our approval of the document's content please contact Christy at 715-779-3398 X 221.

*7/22/2009 Superintendent Concurrence*

## Geographic Information & Location Map

### Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

"Lake Superior provides the eastern boundary for the district. The district shares a boundary with the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, which surrounds it on its northern and western sides. The southern boundary of the district is the southern boundary of the Erickson property. These boundaries encompass those portions of the historic district that retain a high degree of integrity" (Baker 2007).

### State and County:

**State:** WI

**County:** Ashland County

**Size (Acres):** 13.70

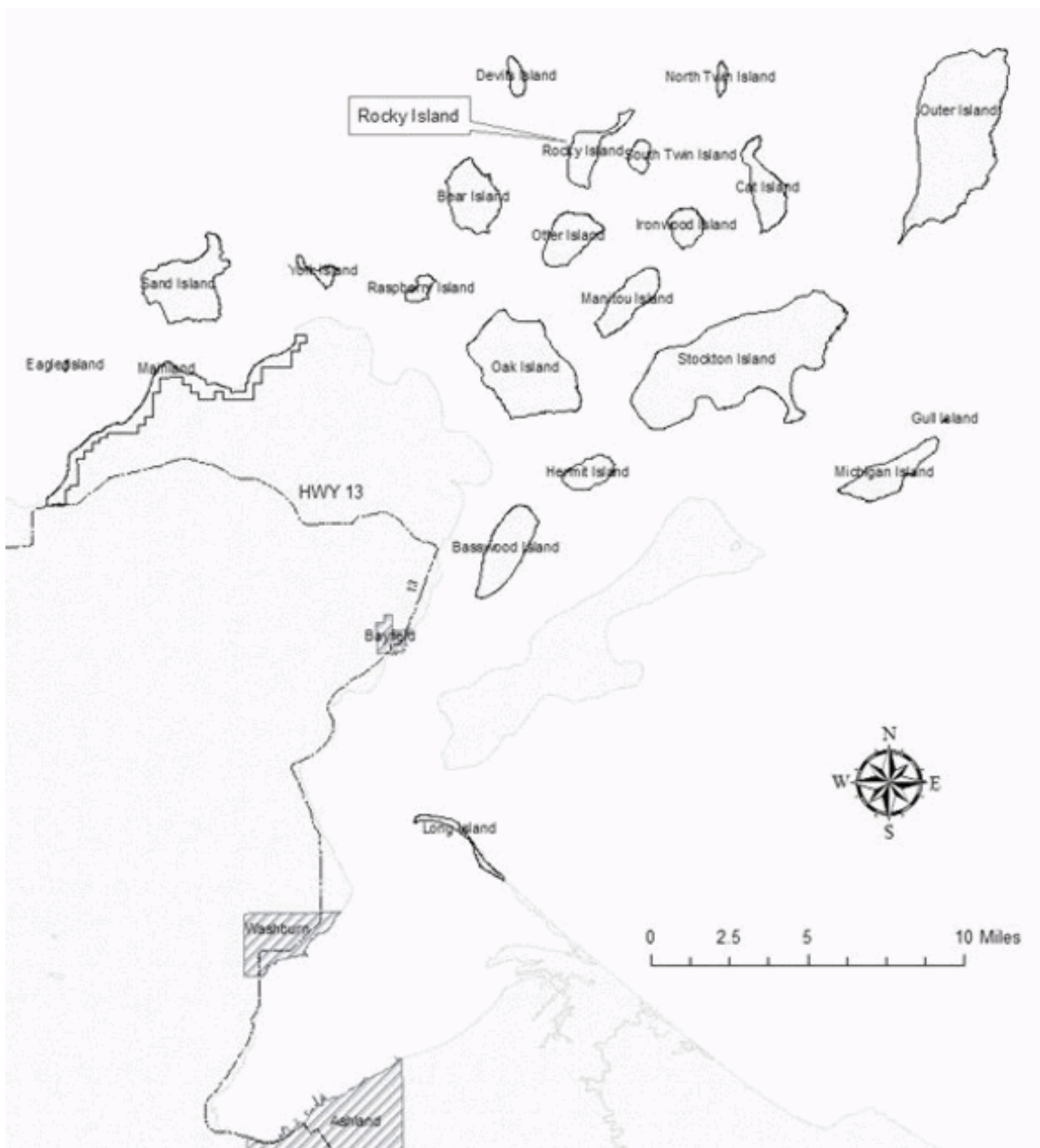
**Boundary UTMS:**

<b>Source:</b>	GPS-Differentially Corrected
<b>Type of Point:</b>	Area
<b>Datum:</b>	NAD 83
<b>UTM Zone:</b>	15
<b>UTM Easting:</b>	677,270
<b>UTM Northing:</b>	5,212,642
<b>Source:</b>	GPS-Differentially Corrected
<b>Type of Point:</b>	Area
<b>Datum:</b>	NAD 83
<b>UTM Zone:</b>	15
<b>UTM Easting:</b>	677,258
<b>UTM Northing:</b>	5,212,673
<b>Source:</b>	GPS-Differentially Corrected
<b>Type of Point:</b>	Area
<b>Datum:</b>	NAD 83
<b>UTM Zone:</b>	15
<b>UTM Easting:</b>	676,878
<b>UTM Northing:</b>	5,211,912
<b>Source:</b>	GPS-Differentially Corrected
<b>Type of Point:</b>	Area
<b>Datum:</b>	NAD 83
<b>UTM Zone:</b>	15
<b>UTM Easting:</b>	676,844
<b>UTM Northing:</b>	5,211,919

**Location Map:**



*Map of Rocky Island*



*Map of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.*

**Regional Context:**

**Type of Context:** Physiographic

**Description:**

The Apostle Islands were formed as a result of a series of geological events that began approximately 1.2 billion years ago, when a mid-continent rift developed that created the Lake Superior Basin. The volcanic rocks that remained from this event eroded and were deposited as a type of sandstone known as the Oronto Group. Streams deposited additional sands in the basin, resulting in three sandstone types that make up the Apostle Islands. The sandstone deposited in the main channels of these streams was more massive and less likely to erode than the sandstone that was deposited outside these channels. Later streams began to carve away at the less massive sandstone, eventually leaving behind landmasses that would later become the Apostle Islands.

Rocky Island is one of the twenty-two islands in the Apostle Islands archipelago. The islands range in size from only a few acres in the case of Gull Island to over 10,000 acres on Stockton. Repeated periods of glaciation during the last Ice Age resulted in deposits of glacial till with a high clay content covering most of the islands. The majority of the islands are comparatively flat with sandstone bedrock lying close to the surface. As a result, the islands in general have poor drainage and swampy areas are common. The shorelines for the majority of the islands are characterized by either sandstone cliffs or high clay bluffs.

The Apostle Island archipelago's sandstones were deposited during the late Precambrian era, about 600 million years ago, and form the basement rock for all the islands. The upper and lower most layers (Chequamegon and Orienta formations) are in the Precambrian Bayfield Group and were deposited by northeastward-flowing braided streams. The Devils Island Formation, between the sandstones, represents deposition across sand-flats that were intermittently covered by shallow water. The Pleistocene ice advances provided an abundance of till, with lesser amounts of glacial outwash, which covers most of the islands. Some glacial drift was streamlined by overriding ice. Terraces, wave-cut benches, and elevated beaches show evidence of higher levels of Lake Superior. High bluffs and glacial drift eroded to provide sand for today's sand spits and beaches such as the narrow strip at Manitou Fish Camp.

Rocky Island once existed as two formerly separate islands that are now connected by a tombolo, a sand formation created by wave action over thousands of years. As the wave action of Lake Superior erodes the northeast tip of Rocky, it moves the sand down the shoreline to build up the beach along the eastern side of the island and to extend the sand spit at the southernmost point.

**Tract Numbers:** 16-103, 16-104, 16-105, 16-106, 16-107, 16-108

**Management Information**



### General Management Information

**Management Category:** Should be Preserved and Maintained

**Management Category Date:** 09/13/1989

**Management Category Explanatory Narrative:**

The 1989 General Management Plan states the need to "preserve, protect, and interpret cultural resources and their settings." This includes "all cultural resources that are important because of their aesthetic values [...] or because of their association with persons, events, or periods in human history."

**Maintenance Location Code:** 29012

### Agreements, Legal Interest, and Access

**Management Agreement:**

**Type of Agreement:** Lease

**Expiration Date:** 2009

**Management Agreement Explanatory Narrative:**

All the fish camps in the historic district, except for Hadland and Benson, are still leased to the previous owners. These leases are due to expire in 2009. The Hadland lease ended in 1999, and the Benson lease ended in 2007.

**NPS Legal Interest:**

**Type of Interest:** Fee Simple

**Public Access:**

**Type of Access:** Other Restrictions

**Explanatory Narrative:**

The Rocky Island Historic District is comprised of formerly privately owned fish camps. Upon NPS acquisition, the families who owned the five fish camps were granted leases. The leases for the Hadland and Benson fish camps expired in 1999 and 2006, respectively. The Edwards, Erickson, and Nelson fish camps are all leased for life (Neuman 1993). Because of the privately held leases, public access to these three properties is restricted.

### Adjacent Lands Information

**Do Adjacent Lands Contribute?** Yes

## National Register Information

### Existing National Register Status

#### National Register Landscape Documentation:

Entered Documented

#### National Register Explanatory Narrative:

Entered 7/3/2008 -Rocky Island Historic District Nomination - POS 1931-1958

### National Register Eligibility

**National Register Concurrence:** Eligible -- Keeper

**Contributing/Individual:** Individual

**National Register Classification:** District

**Significance Level:** Local

**Significance Criteria:** A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history

**Criteria Considerations:** B -- A building or structure removed from its original location

#### Area of Significance:

**Area of Significance Category:** Maritime History

**Area of Significance Category:** Ethnic Heritage

**Area of Significance Category:** Entertainment - Recreation

#### Statement of Significance:

Rocky Island Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places July 3, 2008. It is considered locally significant, and listed under Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. The period of significance spans from 1931 to 1958. This period began with the migration of commercial fishermen from South Twin Island forming the nucleus of the district, and ended with the decline of commercial fishing and the shift to recreational use. Within this span, the district underwent a transition from the extractive industry of commercial fishing to recreation and tourism.

The Apostle Islands have been a fishing center since the earliest recorded times. In 1665, a missionary noted that the waters around the archipelago provided sustenance for the Native American inhabitants. With the arrival of Euro-Americans, large-scale commercial exploitation of regional fisheries began. Over the years, the industry emerged from a small, unorganized trade into a relatively substantial industry, becoming one of the earliest enterprises to achieve success in Wisconsin. The rich spawning areas of Lake Superior provided large numbers of skilled fishermen with a livelihood during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The earliest attempts at establishing a commercial fishery in the archipelago began with the efforts of the American Fur Company. As the fur trade declined, the company experimented with fishing as a way to supplement its revenues and provide employment for otherwise idle voyageurs and trappers. While the success of this endeavor was limited due to rudimentary preservation technology and a lack of nearby markets, the company's Madeline Island headquarters assumed a role as the fishing and warehousing center for the entire Lake Superior and Upper Mississippi region by the mid-1830s. The fishing industry remained a small but significant part of the local economy for the next several decades.

The industry experienced a dramatic expansion beginning in the 1870s, spurred by the intersection of several factors: a growing Midwestern population which provided expanded markets, the establishment of rail transportation which provided timely access to those markets, and the arrival of immigrant groups with strong cultural ties to commercial fishing. By 1870, the Bayfield Press reported that fishing provided full-time employment for 250 men.

Fishermen began using Rocky Island as a base of operations in the 1870s. Its earliest known name, "Sinsibakwado Miniss," was given by the Ojibwe Tribe, and means "Sugar Maple Island." Later, by the mid-1850s, it was called "Ironwood Island." Minnesota Senator Henry Rice purchased the island from the federal government in 1868, and by the time it became used by commercial fishermen, it was known as "Rice's Island." In 1909, the Rice family sold the island to the Carver-Quayle-Nourse Land Company in Bayfield, which then quickly sold it to the Frenzel Land Company of Minneapolis. Around this time the name "Rocky Island" gained common usage. By 1917, the county plat map listed it as "Rocky Island." In 1888, Booth Fisheries established a fishing operation near Rocky Island's southeastern point, which included a dock and a warehouse. As early as 1899, individual fishermen were camping on Rocky Island. By 1910, Booth Fisheries ended operations on the island, focusing instead on purchasing fish from independent fishermen. Under the Frenzel Land Company ownership, there was a brief period of logging, from 1928 to 1931.

At one time, Rocky Island and neighboring South Twin Island were connected at their northern ends by a narrow isthmus, forming a large bay between the two land masses. Even though the two islands have long been separate, their close proximity led to a shared history. In 1868, the same year Henry Rice purchased Rocky Island, the Willey family purchased South Twin Island. As the fishing industry developed in the early twentieth century, numerous fish camps were established on the island. The fishermen, most of who were Norwegian immigrants, either squatted or paid a nominal rent. However, in 1931 one of the fishermen, Lenus Jacobson, bought the island from the Willey family and imposed a

higher rent on the other occupants. This, coupled with a general breakdown in relations, caused many of the fishermen to relocate their camps across the bay onto Rocky Island.

John Fried was the first to move, occupying the paymaster's cabin left behind by the logging operations. Olaf Edwards followed the next year, in 1932. He successfully moved one of his buildings across the strait, and purchased a tract of land that included the logging camp occupied by Fried. Charlie Benson was the last South Twin fisherman to move to Rocky Island, finally relocating in 1936. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, lasting until around 1947, there was an influx of fisherman who purchased land on the island or built cabins on land they did not own.

While some of the original members of the Rocky Island Historic District began retiring in the 1930s, the area remained focused on commercial fishing through the end of World War II. In 1938, however, the first sea lamprey was caught in Lake Superior. With the lake already impacted by overfishing, the invasion of the parasitic lamprey devastated the commercial fishing industry. In 1960, the Booth Company closed its Bayfield office. With commercial fishing in the area effectively ended, older fishermen retired and younger men sought new occupations. The fishermen who persisted moved their operations from the island fish camps to the mainland, working more efficiently with better and faster boats.

As the fishing industry was ending, the tourist industry was gearing up. Laurie Nourse, Sr. was a commercial fisherman who began to use Rocky Island as a base camp in 1938. In 1941, he and his wife Grace purchased property on the island, just south of what is now the historic district. One of the first buildings the Nourses erected on the property was a cabin they had moved from the mainland. Laurie began to subsidize his commercial fishing with other lines of business. He took sports fishermen out on trolling excursions, and began selling refreshments to tourists who arrived at his dock. The Nourses attempted to develop a seaplane base that never reached fruition, but by 1946 they had an operational restaurant, and by 1954 they had built lodging cabins to accommodate hunters who came to the island. The family called their business the Rocky Island Air Haven, and it remained in operation until 1974, when the NPS purchased the property. While the Nourse family ran a business, most of the neighboring properties were used as summer homes, reflecting a regional trend.

Although the transition in use began to alter the appearance of some of the properties, acquisition by the NPS in 1974 ensured that the structures and landscape features of the Rocky Island Historic District would continue to retain the characteristics of a small-scale commercial fishing operation practiced by Northern European immigrants.

## Chronology & Physical History

### Cultural Landscape Type and Use

**Cultural Landscape Type:** Vernacular

**Current and Historic Use/Function:**

<b>Primary Historic Function:</b>	Fishing Facility (Hatchery)
<b>Primary Current Use:</b>	Campground/Picnic Area
<b>Other Use/Function</b>	<b>Other Type of Use or Function</b>
Camp	Historic
Campground/Picnic Area	Historic
Concession	Historic
Camp	Current
Vacant (Not In Use)-Other	Current

**Current and Historic Names:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Type of Name</b>
Rocky Island Historic District	Current
Rocky Island	Both Current And Historic
Rice's Island	Historic
Ironwood Island	Historic
Sinsibakwado Miniss	Historic

**Ethnographic Study Conducted:** No Survey Conducted

**Chronology:**

Year	Event	Annotation
500 BC	Inhabited	Around 500 BC, woodland Indian cultures began to inhabit the northern Great Lakes region, including the Apostle Islands.
AD 1659 - 1762	Established	In 1659, French explorers arrived at Chequamegon Bay, and in the following year erected a fort. Primarily interested in the fur trade, the French intermittently operated out of a fort at Madeline Island. New France fell to the British in 1762, ending the presence of French forts.
AD 1837 - 1854	Land Transfer	Native lands, which included the Apostle Islands, were ceded to the United States government in the treaties of 1837, 1842, and 1854.

AD 1928 - 1931	Built	In 1928, J.H. Deniston and Eli LaPointe developed a contract with the Frenzel Land Company, which owned Rocky Island, to log hardwood trees for railroad ties and veneer. That same year they constructed a logging camp which included a dock and for buildings. Logging operations ceased in 1931, and the only structure that remains is the paymaster's office, which John Fried briefly occupied and later became used as a storage shed.
AD 1931 - 1932	Moved	In 1931, John Fried was the first South Twin Island fisherman to relocate to Rocky Island. He initially stayed in the old lumber camp paymaster office. In 1932, he built the main cabin for the Hadland camp, known as the Fried Cabin.
AD 1932	Purchased/Sold	Around 1932, Olaf Edwards purchased forty acres that included the paymaster's office, which he rented to John Fried for a short time.
AD 1935 - 1948	Land Transfer	Around 1935, Louis Olsen bought the remainder of the logging camp. He lived in the cook shack for a period of time, but eventually it and the other buildings were dismantled. At some point, Olsen sold the land to Martin Erickson and his son, Melvin Erickson. In 1948, Melvin bought out his father's share of the fish camp.
AD 1935	Built	Sometime around 1935, the first cabin was built at the Edwards Fish Camp by Olaf Hjalmer and his sons.
AD 1936 - 1942	Inhabited	Charlie Benson moved from South Twin Island to Rocky Island in 1936. He actively maintained the Benson Fish Camp until 1942. There was a pre-existing cabin on the property (Bernard's Cabin), which Benson from the northern end to the southern end. Benson built the main family cabin in 1936, and later built the fish house and Mildred's Cabin.
AD 1938	Purchased/Sold	In 1938, Christian Hadland purchased what is now the Hadland Fish Camp from John Fried.
AD 1938 - 1998	Inhabited	Christian Hadland fished out of the Hadland Fish Camp beginning in 1938. In 1943, his sons Harvey and Clifford also began fishing from the site, continuing until their retirement in 1988. They continued to use the Fried Cabin as a summer residence until 1998.

AD 1943	Maintained	In 1943, Charlie Benson died. Although the Benson Fish Camp was no longer used for fishing, his children continued to use the property for summer recreation. In the 1940s, Fred Benson built a summer cottage, known as "Fred's Cabin".
AD 1947	Land Transfer	In 1947, Olaf Edwards sold his property to Julian Nelson, who relocated two cabins from Stockton Island to the site that is known as Nelson Fish Camp.
AD 1966	Land Transfer	In 1966, Julian Edwards subdivided his land and transferred the Edwards Fish Camp portion to John Chapin.
AD 1970	Established	Apostle Islands National Lakeshore was established in 1970.
AD 1977	Established	Hadland Fish Camp was entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.
AD 2008	Established	Rocky Island Historic District was entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

## Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

### Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historic identity or the extent to which a property evokes its appearance during a particular historic period, usually the period of significance. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Aspects of integrity deemed most important for evaluation are based on a property's significance under National Register criteria. Retention of these aspects is essential for a property to convey its significance, though not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present to convey a sense of past time and place. Collectively, these aspects help foster an understanding of the landscape's historic character and cultural importance.

Rocky Island Historic District occupies a distinctive location on one of the outermost islands of the Apostles archipelago, which provided fishermen with both close access to the open lake and a sheltered docking area. Although some of the cabins have been relocated during and after the period of significance, they were designed to be mobile, and remain in a historically appropriate setting. The five fish camps share a cohesive style of vernacular design, with most of the historic buildings of balloon frame construction and set upon log piers. The cabins all have gabled roofs, while smaller buildings and additions often have shed roofs. The structures, constructed of sawn lumber and logs recycled from other buildings and rafts, retain integrity aspect of historic material. Due to the relatively unchanged setting and the structural integrity of the camps, the historic district conveys both the feeling and association of the period of significance.

The historic district retains integrity in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. According to National Register guidelines, a property either does or does not retain its overall integrity, and does or does not convey its significance. Even though there have been changes since the historic period, overall the landscape retains the characteristics, physical attributes, and historic associations it had during the period of significance, from 1931 to 1958.

<b>Aspects of Integrity:</b>	Location
	Design
	Setting
	Materials
	Workmanship
	Feeling
	Association

### Landscape Characteristic:



### **Buildings and Structures**

The fish camps – clusters of small, transportable structures – are the character-defining feature of the Rocky Island Historic District. Although the utilitarian buildings project a rustic character, the quality of construction has given them durability in a harsh environment. “Most of the vernacular-style buildings are built of sawn lumber, though several are made of logs. As might be expected in an island location, there has been considerable recycling of material. Lake Superior has provided a share of material as well: some docks and cottages were built from pulp logs lost from rafts towed across the lake from Minnesota and Canada” (Baker 2007). The five fish camps contain a total of twenty-six contributing structural features and seventeen noncontributing structural features, listed as follows:

#### **Hadland Fish Camp**

Contributing: Fried Cabin.

Noncontributing: privy and wooden bench.

#### **Benson Fish Camp**

Contributing: Bernard’s Cabin, Mildred’s Cabin, Main Benson Cabin, Fred’s Cabin, privy, fish house, dock, and three skiffs.

Noncontributing: middle privy and southernmost privy.

#### **Edwards fish Camp**

Contributing: Edwards Cabin and Norman’s Cabin.

Noncontributing: privy and metal storage shed.

#### **Nelson Fish Camp**

Contributing: Nelson Cabin, Edwards Cabin, tool shed, Olaf Edwards Shed, dock, fish smoker, and net reel.

Noncontributing: Jones Cabin, Jones Privy, Nourse Cabin, Nourse Privy, privy, stairway from old Nourse property, shower/sauna, and boat launcher.

#### **Erickson Fish Camp**

Contributing: Erickson Cabin, storage shed, generator shed, dock, engine house, and southern stairs.

Noncontributing: privy, northern stairs, and wooden flagpole.

### **Character-defining Features:**

Feature: Hadland Fishing Camp Cabin - Building A

Feature Identification Number: 133678

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 6397

LCS Structure Name: Hadland Fishing Camp Cabin - Building A

LCS Structure Number: 16103A

Feature: Hadland Fishing Camp - Family Camp Ruin

Feature Identification Number: 133680

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 6398

LCS Structure Name: Hadland Fishing Camp Family Camp Ruin

LCS Structure Number: 16103B

Feature: Hadland Fishing Camp - John Fried Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133682

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 6399

LCS Structure Name: John Fried Cabin (Hadland Fishing Camp)

LCS Structure Number: 16103C

Feature: Hadland Fishing Camp Net Reels

Feature Identification Number: 133684

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 6402

LCS Structure Name: Hadland Fishing Camp Net Reels

LCS Structure Number: 16103F

Feature: Charlie Benson's Fish House

Feature Identification Number: 133686

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 101598

LCS Structure Name: Charlie Benson's Fish House

LCS Structure Number: 16104A

Feature: Benson Fishing Camp - Bernhard's Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133688

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 101600

LCS Structure Name: Bernhard's Cabin (Benson)

LCS Structure Number: 16104B

Feature: Benson Family Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133690

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 101603

LCS Structure Name: Benson Family Cabin

LCS Structure Number: 16104C

Feature: Benson Privy

Feature Identification Number: 133692

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 101605

LCS Structure Name: Benson Privy

LCS Structure Number: 16104D

Feature: Benson Fishing Camp - Mildred's Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133700

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number: 101606

LCS Structure Name: Mildred's Cabin (Benson)

LCS Structure Number: 16104E

Feature: Benson Dock

Feature Identification Number: 133704

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Fred Benson's Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133706

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Edwards Fishing Camp - Norman's Cabin

Feature Identification Number: 133696

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

IDLCS Number:	101612
LCS Structure Name:	Norman's Cabin
LCS Structure Number:	16105C
Feature:	Edwards Cabin
Feature Identification Number:	133694
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
Feature:	Olaf Edwards' Shed
Feature Identification Number:	133708
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
Feature:	Nelson Fishing Camp Dock
Feature Identification Number:	133710
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
Feature:	Nelson Tool Shed
Feature Identification Number:	133712
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
Feature:	Nelson Living Cabin
Feature Identification Number:	133714
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101614
LCS Structure Name:	Nelson Living Cabin
LCS Structure Number:	16106A
Feature:	Nelson Metal Storage Building
Feature Identification Number:	133716
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101615
LCS Structure Name:	Nelson Metal Storage Building
LCS Structure Number:	16106B
Feature:	Nelson Fishing Camp - Edwards Cabin
Feature Identification Number:	133718

Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101616
LCS Structure Name:	Edward's Cabin (Nelson)
LCS Structure Number:	16106C
Feature: Nelson Privy	
Feature Identification Number:	133720
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101617
LCS Structure Name:	Nelson Privy
LCS Structure Number:	16106D
Feature: Nelson Net Reel	
Feature Identification Number:	133722
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101619
LCS Structure Name:	Nelson Net Drying Rack
LCS Structure Number:	16106F
Feature: Nelson Fishing Camp - Jones Main Cabin	
Feature Identification Number:	133724
Type of Feature Contribution:	Non Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101608
LCS Structure Name:	Jones Main Cabin
LCS Structure Number:	16105A
Feature: Nelson Fishing Camp - Jones Privy	
Feature Identification Number:	133726
Type of Feature Contribution:	Non Contributing
IDLCS Number:	101610
LCS Structure Name:	Jones Privy
LCS Structure Number:	16105B
Feature: Erickson Storage Shed	

Feature Identification Number: 133728  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing  
IDLCS Number: 101620  
LCS Structure Name: Erickson Storage Shed  
LCS Structure Number: 16108A

Feature: Erickson Main Cabin  
Feature Identification Number: 133732  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Erickson Privy  
Feature Identification Number: 133734  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Erickson Dock  
Feature Identification Number: 133730  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Erickson Generator Shed  
Feature Identification Number: 133736  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Erickson South Stairs  
Feature Identification Number: 133738  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Erickson Small Engine Shed  
Feature Identification Number: 133740  
Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

**Landscape Characteristic Graphics:**



*Hadland Fish Camp, Fried Cabin, looking southwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Benson Fish Camp, Mildred's Cabin, looking southwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*View of Benson Fish Camp from the lake, Benson's Cabin, looking west (Mackreth 2004)*





*Benson Fish Camp, Mildred's Cabin, looking north (Mackreth 2004)*



*Benson Fish Camp, northern privy and skiff, looking south (Mackreth 2004)*



*Benson Fish Camp, the fish house, looking northwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Benson Fish Camp, Fred's Cabin, looking north (Mackreth 2004)*



*Benson Fish Camp, Benson Cabin, looking north (Mackreth 2004)*



*Edwards Fish Camp, Edwards Cabin, looking southwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Edwards Fish Camp, Norman's Cabin, looking west (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, Jones Cabin, (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, dock, looking southeast (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, showing dock, tool shed, flagpole, and Nelson Cabin, looking west  
(Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, shed, looking north (Mackreth 2004)*





*Nelson Fish Camp, tool shed, looking southwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, shoreline with net reel and dock, looking south (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, Olaf Edwards Shed, looking southwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, Edwards Cabin and Nelson Cabin, looking northeast (Mackreth 2004)*



*Nelson Fish Camp, Nourse Cabin, looking south*



*Erickson Fish Camp, generator shed and storage shed, looking northwest (Mackreth 2004)*



*Erickson Fish Camp, Erickson Cabin, looking northwest (Mackreth 2004)*

### **Circulation**

“A pathway links the Rocky Island properties to one another and connects to a National Park Service (NPS) trail at the southern end of the district, which leads to the NPS dock and campsites. The main pathway also serves as the chief means of movement among the buildings. In addition, pathways lead to privies which are primarily located up a slope through wooded vegetation, to afford privacy. As an alternative to the main pathway, one can walk along the beach from the Rocky Island Historic District to the south to reach the NPS dock or to the northeast to reach the Hadland property. A wooded dirt path connecting the Hadland site to the rest of the Rocky Island Historic District was used during storms. Historically an open pathway, now balsam fir, white cedar, yellow birch and red maple have encroached onto the trail” (Baker 2007).

### **Character-defining Features:**

Feature:	Social trail linking historic structures
Feature Identification Number:	134670
Type of Feature Contribution:	Contributing

### **Spatial Organization**

“Lake Superior, topography, and vegetation influence the spatial character of the Rocky Island

Historic District. The lake was important to the fishermen not only for commercial fishing opportunities, but also as a significant means of transportation in the region. Additionally, the lake serves as one side of the district's boundary and most of the buildings found within the district are oriented towards the lake." (Baker 2007).

"While the historic legal boundaries of the property extend inland, most of the buildings and other significant cultural landscape features are found within 100 feet of the shoreline. Buildings directly connected to commercial fishing tend to be located near the docks, along the shoreline with open vegetation. The sleeping cabins are generally found abutting the wooded area and the privies tend to be placed at a higher elevation in the wooded areas. The overall circulation pattern of the historic district is linear, based on the main pathway, which runs parallel to the shoreline. While Rocky Island follows the grid pattern of the land ordinance system, the properties on Rocky Island are long and narrow lots, similar to those found along rivers in former French territories. This arrangement ensures that each property owner has lake frontage" (Baker 2007).

### **Vegetation**

"Forests of the Apostle Islands include both the northern hardwood forest and the boreal forest. The pre-settlement forest on Rocky Island was dominated by large yellow birch, white pine, white cedar, and balsam fir. The forest is currently dominated by white cedar, white birch, balsam fir, yellow birch, sugar maple, and red maple" (Neuman 1993).

The native vegetation on the island would have provided for the seasonal inhabitants. Wood from fallen or harvested trees would have been used for campfires, woodstoves, fireplaces, and smokers (as present at the Nelson fish camp). Edible perennials common to the Apostle Islands may have been collected and utilized by the seasonal inhabitants of Rocky Island. These plants included cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, currents, gooseberries cherries, and herbs.

Due to the commercial and practical nature of the fish camps, sizable ornamental plants may not have been a priority (as none have been documented to date). It is more than likely that the native vegetation was tended in a way that would allow for privacy between the camps and aesthetics around the vicinity of the structures.

Small kitchen gardens may have been present to supplement the diet of the fishermen. Such gardens have not been documented but are known to have existed in general at fish camps and other island settlements around the great lakes. Such seasonal gardens would have provided a variety of foods and seasonings. Plants in gardens documented at other sites within the Apostle Islands include onion, lettuce, cucumber, beans, peas, squash, asparagus, tomato, cabbage, potato and beets. These consumable plants may have been present at one point at the fish camps as well.

### **Cultural Traditions**

"Most of the fishermen on Rocky Island were immigrants from the Nordic countries, especially Norway. The majority came from the coastal town of Egersund, located in Rogaland, near the

southern tip of Norway. Many of the Rocky Island immigrants had been fishermen or fisher-farmers in the old country. Their fishing tools and techniques were combined with those of other immigrants in the communities surrounding Lake Superior” (Baker 2007).

## Condition

### Condition Assessment and Impacts

**Condition Assessment:** Good  
**Assessment Date:** 09/24/2008

#### Impacts

<b>Type of Impact:</b>	Erosion
<b>External or Internal:</b>	Internal
<b>Impact Description:</b>	As with any shoreline settlement water erosion from rain and from the lake are always potential impacts which should be monitored and controlled as necessary.
<b>Type of Impact:</b>	Vegetation/Invasive Plants
<b>External or Internal:</b>	Internal
<b>Impact Description:</b>	Native plants could encroach upon open spaces and clearings within the fish camp settlements and between them. To stabilize the clearings, open areas, and trails the park will need to monitor the growth of vegetation through photographs and site visits and make decision on how to control the succession process through selective removal, pruning, and mowing.

## Treatment



## Treatment

**Approved Treatment:** Preservation  
**Approved Treatment Document:** General Management Plan  
**Document Date:** 09/13/1989

### Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative:

"The management emphasis in the historic zone is to preserve, protect, and interpret cultural resources and their settings. This zone contains all cultural resources that are important because of their aesthetic values (which merit full communication to park visitors) or because of their associations with persons, events, or periods in human history. Historically significant structures may be used, with necessary modifications, or leased for contemporary public or administrative activities or functions, as long as the qualities that make these resources qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places are perpetuated. Logging camps, fishing camps, light stations, homesteads, quarries, archeological sites, and shipwrecks (if they are owned by the National Park Service) are included in this category" (GMP 1989)

**Approved Treatment Completed:** No

## Approved Treatment Costs

**Cost Date:** 09/13/1989

## Bibliography and Supplemental Information

### Bibliography

<b>Citation Author:</b>	Baker, Christine C., Robert W. Mackreth, Katy E. Holmer
<b>Citation Title:</b>	National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Rocky Island Historic District
<b>Year of Publication:</b>	2007
<b>Citation Author:</b>	National Park Service
<b>Citation Title:</b>	Apostle Islands National Lakeshore General Management Plan
<b>Year of Publication:</b>	1989
<b>Citation Publisher:</b>	National Park Service
<b>Citation Author:</b>	Neuman, Martha
<b>Citation Title:</b>	What Are Those Cabins Doing There?: History and Resource Management at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore
<b>Year of Publication:</b>	1993
<b>Citation Publisher:</b>	University of Wisconsin - Madison

### **Supplemental Information**

**Title:** Park Report Cover Image

**Description:** Aerial view image of the Rocky Island Historic District was taken by William Cronon in 2008, found on [www.williamcronon.net](http://www.williamcronon.net)