

A Memorable Cruise



1908

A MEMORABLE CRUISE

was written in 1908 by Charles Dassler and Charles Parker Connolly. The narration is a record of a trip around Isle Royale by four men — two of which are the authors. The story comes to us through Mr. J. A. Lawrence of Milwaukee, descendant of another crew member.

The members of the crew were all summer-residents of Tobin Harbor. The characters are as follows: Captain, Carl Dassler; Mate, Charles Dassler; Steward, Wilder Lawrence; Chaplain, Charles Connolly.

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. August, 1962.

A MEMORABLE CRUISE

CHAPTER I — THE CREW AND THE START

Listen my children and you shall hear
of Captain Carl and his dangers drear.

In the year of our Lord 1908, on August the thirteenth but one day before Friday (ye superstitious sign) a notable voyage of immortal discovery was begun by four dauntless mariners. This invincible quartet of reckless rovers, to the consternation of all the fishermen of Tobin Harbor, started in a sixteen foot launch towing two row-boats to make a journey of over a hundred miles around Isle Royale, Michigan, in Lake Superior, Longitude 87, Latitude 48. The reckless four were Mr. Charles F. W. Dassler, a high-strung, nervous man and sound sleeper, Mr. Carl Dassler, the tirelessly taciturn, Mr. Wilder Lawrence, the incessantly loquacious, and Mr. Charles Parker Conolly, the phlegmatic.

The start was made at 2:25 P.M. Treacherous Blake Point was speedily passed in silence and then Dame Nature proceeded to baptize the devotees of Neptune. A thunder shower inspected the craft and crew with something more than a fall of dew, in fact a trifle more than they thought due. Fish Island was at last sighted and reached at 4:24 P.M. Thanks to the hospitality of Mr. Johnson, the mariners were not compelled to pitch tent in the damp. One of the cottages on "Paradise Avenue", as the sign board modestly announced, offered the luxury of shelter and stove. A semi-American meal was eaten on a Swedish table. Schafkopf kept the mariners on an intense intellectual strain until bed time when Captain Carl, Mate Charles and Steward Wilder slept on the floor. As the boards were undressed they remained dressed, on the theory that opposites attract. The Chaplain was graciously permitted to share the bed of a Swedish fisherman employed by ye host Johnson. Suffice it to say that the Swede slept with the Chaplain, but the Chaplain did not sleep with the Swede.

CHAPTER II

M^CCARGO COVE AND ITS PISCATORIAL PRODIGALITY

Listen my children and you shall shout
What mammoth pickerel, what bonny trout.

At 8:11 A.M. the entire crew and the whole squadron launched forth on the deep bound for M^CCargo Cove. Arriving there at 9:13am the flotilla was left in charge of the sagacious Mate while the rest of the crew proceeded upon a piscatorial investigation. The printed reports of the varieties and species of fish to be found in these waters (the discerning reader is invited to carefully consider the foregoing

phrase "to be found") may be read in the Government Special, Volume 13, p. 13 to 13,000. They make special mention in that voluminous and creditable report of the fine brook trout grounds encountered, but seem to have no grounds for discussing the trout themselves. People who are surfeited themselves often forget how delightful trout are to others, and even a description of a great catch is more interesting than sheer silence. One must not be too exacting, however, of mere fishermen. These mariners were immortal sailors not illustrious authors.

At the head of the cove there is a stream, and in that stream there was something. The whole three-fourths of the crew sustained a most unexpected shock when a small lake trout, or a large brook trout, or something else suddenly, without any preliminary announcement took hold of the trolling spoon and as suddenly spat the spoon out. The scenery proved somewhat more numerous than the piscatorial specimens mounted. The Captain with his eagle-eye sighted a bunch of birches and his camera soon did its deadly work.

The old wharf of the copper plant was discovered by the mariners, cat tails were gathered and more pickerel grounds were cited. "We did not get our pick of the pickerel", observed one sad fisherman of the party.

This second chapter of the cruise of the cliff dwellers must end with the praiseworthy chronicle that up to this time there had been no complaint much less sign of mutiny on the part of the sailors because of the steady diet of fresh fish.

CHAPTER III

TODD'S HARBOR, BROOK TROUT, LAKE HATCHET, AND SUNDRY INVISIBILITIES SEEN BY THE CREW

Listen my children and you shall Grin
At the Tale of Tail and Scales and Fin.

McCargo Cove was left at 1pm by Mate Dassler's Chronometer. The voyage to Todd's Harbor was smooth and without incident.

The boats beached high, tents pitched, the crew started forth with special strings under coats to preserve the huge catch of brook trout in the famous creek to the west of their camp. The stream was reached, the lines were feverishly dropped, and great quantities of brook trout were taken from the stream — by others last Fourth of July. The Mate having some legal lore bethought himself of a new method (though not unfamiliar to some courts of law) of catching fish and succeeded in obtaining a white fish, whereupon in a lucid interval, the Chaplain asked no questions but ate fish. For further particulars

one must consult the pond net of Captain Francis of M^cCargo Cove.

The next day, Sunday morning, Captain Francis lifted the net and the whole crew enjoyed the spectacle of squirming fish. No matter how many fish one catches, they always enjoy seeing others, so that their delight in this spectacle must not be attributed to any eccentricity on the part of the cruisers.

The day previous (i.e. Saturday) the crew started to discover the trail to Hatchet Lake. Variouslly bedoped they plunged into the wilderness. Certain marks on certain trees provoked considerable discussion. Whether they were knots or not, whether they were blazes or not, divided the crew into rival and contentious parties, for we all devoutly wished to go by blazes. It seemed at last to be unanimously decided that the trail was not discovered and surmounted. But the weary travellers were well repaid for their tireless perseverance, for at last the glorious vision of Lake Hatchet burst upon their vision.

Lake Hatchet is shaped like George Washington — it cannot lie, for the party did not once discover a place where it lies. It is full of brook trout according to the Chaplain. It is dried up according to the Captain. It is surrounded by a swamp, according to the Mate. The Steward has thus far expressed no idea concerning the Lake. Two features of this memorable inland trip will never be forgotten. The large luscious and abundant blueberries and raspberries which refreshed the weary sailors and the smooth, elastic rocks upon the high cliffs. These rocks were found in several piles surrounded by broken bits of copper-bearing rocks. It is surmised that the Indians used them in mining copper. Some of the old trenches, (Costeans) made by the copper mining companies were also discovered and a few large mosquitoes and other treasures. Weary, but still undaunted, the crew returned to camp after a seven hours' battle with rocks, swamps, fallen trees, tangles, bushes and insects. They report that the inland lake fishing is good — for others.

Sunday afternoon, a grave on the hill was visited, a snake killed, an old journal discovered full of entries concerning supplies used by an old mining company once located there, and a supper prepared to be eaten en route and the sailors started Sunday evening to let the gasoline do the work and Captain Carl, the steering for the ever hopeful mariners. The precise time of departure was 6:30pm.

CHAPTER IV — LITTLE TODD AND A BIG FISH

Listen our Ladies, and you shall know
How they rode the Waves and broke the Tow

On Sabbath evening, just at sunset, the merry mariners resumed their voyage.

In the Harbor the waves were low, but out on the open Lake they proved higher, and kept rising as the wind rose. The little launch behaved perfectly, never missing an explosion and leaping up on the waves with an easy confidence. The sailors ate as they sailed with the spray flying in their faces, but not all the spray could wash away their pleasant smiles. The rear row-boat, being a very virtuous craft, imagined that the launch was too fast a companion, so it broke away from its leader and went drifting about. Captain Carl thereupon skillfully mended the tow line amid the bouncing waves, while the crew looked on in admiration. As the wind and waves kept getting higher it was unanimously decided to put into Little Todd's Harbor. There the tents were pitched just as the darkness settled about the Sailors. A thunder shower was specially gotten up for the party and proved an entire success, blowing over the Captain and Mate's tent so that they were compelled to dress again, (the process consisting in the assumption of a necktie and morning smile on Carl's part and a shirt or so by the Mate), and the guys then repaired and tightened the guy lines.

The next morning it blew for a change and the mariners cooked their breakfast on the fisherman's stove. The Captain described the Mate's efforts to sleep with the small of his back on the top of a rock and his head at the foot of the hill on one side and his feet at the bottom of the hill on the other side. The Mate prefers sleeping on the ground to any of the modern newfangled luxuries, but he was strangely reticent about the delights of his slumber the first night at Little Todd's. Meanwhile, the Captain with a determined gleam in his serene eyes announced his ultimatum. "I shall make a bed."

After breakfast the Captain and the Chaplain started for brook trout. They groped, crawled, wormed, sneaked, sprawled and otherwise betook themselves through two miles of impediments too numerous and profane to describe. At last the trout stream was discovered. The Captain has a rise immediately. The Captain had a second rise. The Captain had no more signs and stretched himself out to sleep. The Chaplain was determined to discover the nature of the illusive thing that the Captain failed to land. He tried various flies and at last landed a huge brook trout, being at least four inches long all at one time and in one place. With this coveted and invaluable prey the party returned, but found that the heavy weight of the fish added much to the discomfort of their return. They arrived in time for dinner, after which raspberries were plucked fresh from the bushes, the white caps were watched, the wind was felt, the sky was scrutinized, the Captain went into the furniture business. At sunset the party climbed a fine cliff to the north of the fisherman's settlement while the Captain in a playful fit of deceitfulness took a moonlight view of the setting sun. That night some of the sailors again slept since it seemed the only thing left to do.

Early in the morning (3:40am) the Chaplain called all hands to rise. The wind had partially subsided, the waves were lower. After breakfast one of the fishermen with a quiet air of Finnish finality announced that "Him will clear up." Another fisherman surveying the same lake, clouds, sky, etc., calmly announced, "Him will blow." The mariners decided that "Him will clear up" was the proper prognostication and they sailed forth. "Him" blew a little worse. The Mate by a miscalculation misled the Captain as to his whereabouts.

Meanwhile, "Him" was blowing some more. Now for the first time the situation looked a trifle ominous. The shore was rocky with no immediate prospect of a favorable place for landing. The waves kept getting higher. Fortunately, the sailors had purchased a new tow line at Little Todd's some eighty feet long, so that they had no fear of another broken line. The spray kept spraying and "Him" kept blowing. At last a fisherman's boat was spied. As the launch neared it the skippers saw that the fishermen had poured oil on the troubled waters, which so mollified them as to make it easy for the launch to turn broadside and enter a cove which to the delight of the mariners the fishermen announced as "Huginnin Cove".

After a council of war it was agreed that the Captain and Mate should go on to Washington Harbor, six miles away, mail cards, and return with butter for the crew. The little launch bobbed up and down, riding the waves gracefully and without danger. Meanwhile, the Steward and Chaplain discovered another trout stream but did not fish the stream, not only because of the weariness of catching fish perpetually, but chiefly because the stream had no water in it. The sailors had learned before this that a dried up stream is not quite so likely to contain an abundant supply of fish. Still they do not wish to be confident concerning the habits of brook trout. Their only dogmatic and insistent affirmation being that they knew nothing about brook trout and believe that no one else does. They then returned, having found a pen knife by the trout stream, made a camp fire, pitched the tents, and hungrily awaited the return of their partners.

They came with faces full of spray rainbowed with smiles as they told of the brave little craft's plucky encounter with the waves, of their timely arrival, of the Steamer Easton's appearance and of their deep abysmal appetite. The crew ate no fish at that meal so that they would not become surfeited with the bounty of the Lake. The Chaplain regretted his inability to kill a wild duck near the cliff. The stones thrown by the Steward and himself had caused the duck to depart from the scene, but not from the flesh.

The waves having gone down in the night, the mariners voted to leave terra firma and seek Neptune's domains again.

CHAPTER V - WASHINGTON HARBOR, THE BROOK TROUT, THE CARIBOU, AND OTHER DISCOVERIES.

Listen sweet ladies and you shall know
That the Washington Harborites saw a great show.

We left the Cove at 11:22am and arrived at Washington Harbor just as the steamer from Port Arthur arrived with an excursion party.

Washington Harbor is a summer resort for people who have more clothes than they can display at home and who need a quiet place where they can act as a peg upon which to hang their fashionable gowns. The men wear golf clothes, chiefly because of the absence of golf. The women wear white skirts and other absurdities. The mariners mused upon these visions as they walked down the board walk. That walk down the board walk has become one of the deathless traditions of the famous resort. At last four happy looking mortals, properly clothed, properly dirty, had appeared as happy ghosts at their unhappy banquet. The languid ladies bristled with interest and followed the blissful mariners with their envious eyes. Here were men living the simple life and daring to be happy. "How preposterous" sighed Dame Fashion. Undismayed by feminine eyes and sexless cameras focused upon them, the sailors reeled on. A board walk beneath their feet felt as uncertain as a Merry-go-round. They continued to lift their feet high in the air to avoid rocks that were not there. Still the ladies stared. Still the sailors lumbered down the board walk. At last after re-stocking with provisions and gasoline, the crew started down the Harbor.

The Captain and Chaplain found some more most promising grounds which they fished with a pathetic patience. Being so near civilization, they determined it would be prudent not to catch more than the law permits. They discovered the Club House, the seat of the old copper mine, and actually beheld with their own eyes, upon Isle Royale a horse, a cow, and a pig. This vision filled them with such amazement that they returned to the camp in a pleasant little nook on the south shore of the Harbor, perhaps two miles from Singerville.

The phenomena of special significance and prominence must now detain the historian. First, the Mate forgot that he was a human being and having found a particularly hard rock on which to comfortably lie, fell asleep and imagined himself a living fog horn. His lusty foghorn solo not only terrified the Chaplain who mistook it for a man-eating lion in the brush, but actually attracted some large animal which crushed through the underbrush and finally dashed off. It was afterward learned that the animal was probably a Caribou.

Early the next morning the prospects in the harbor seemed to warrant the continuance of the cruise, especially since it was more generous to leave the remaining brook trout for the people of the region. Accordingly the crew started, went to the mouth of the harbor, discovered a storm raging and returned to Double Island where the boats were beached, and the sailors washed their faces, hands and handkerchiefs and stretched out on the sand for a sun-bath. After this refreshing performance which the Captain confided to his observing camera the party made a fashionable call at Singerville, walking down the board walk again with such high-stepping as had not been witnessed there from time immemorial. The high cliff was surmounted, the view was taken by the sailors and they returned to the exciting board walk again. It was still there in all its strange levelness. The dudes and dusesess tried to interpret the mysterious animals which thus had invaded their listless quarters, but the phenomenon was beyond comprehension.

The sailors found the fishermen more intelligent and communicative than the Singervilleites so the Chaplain proceeded to accumulate information as to the weather. He explained to the first Finn that he found there was some discrepancy in the prognostications of sundry fishermen and asked him what might be relied upon as a sure thing. The Finn thereupon assumed an impressive air of profound intelligence and gravely announced, "If him blows two days from the sou'west and you see clouds gathering in the nor'west, the wind will change."

The Chaplain rejoiced in the possession of one infallible deliverance and went to the second Finn expecting an unqualified corroboration. But the second Finn when catechized as to the reliability of the sou'west, nor'west combination shook his head and drawled, "Sometimes."

"What then do you think is a sure thing?" queried the Chaplain.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said with an engaging air of confidence, "if he blows from the sou'west and you see clouds coming from the nor'west, him will blow like the devil."

Thereupon, the Chaplain made up his mind as touching one point. The fishermen are most happy in the first statement they invariably make, "well, I don't know."

The next morning it was decided that it would be more prudent, since the weather was so uncertain, for the Steward and the Chaplain to take their row-boat and go home on the Steamer Easton.

Heavily ballasted with a good meal and two pieces of apple pie, the Chaplain and Steward started forth, arriving in Tobin Harbor at

six o'clock that evening to the infinite surprise of Rheinhardt, who thought that they had all died several deaths by that time.

This ends the tale so far as the semi-circumnavigators is concerned. The next chapters will relate the adventures of the circumnavigators, the Captain and Mate.

THE MATE'S ADDENDUM

CHAPTER VI — THE PARTING OF THE WAYS — THE START IN THE WAVES — THE CRUISE ON THE WAVES — THE ARRIVAL AT FISHERMEN'S HOME

The Chaplain and the Steward left Double Island Camp about 9:30am Friday August 21, in the Chaplain's row-boat taking with them their belongings. The food supply (as it seemed uncertain when the remaining half of the crew would reach the home port) was left for the subsistence of the Captain and the Mate. The crew thus parted in twain, the Captain and the Mate after a re-arrangement of the camp, at about 11am (the schedule time for the arrival of the good steamer Easton) rowed to the dock at Washington Harbor, where the Chaplain and the Steward were found anxiously searching the northerly entrances to the Harbor for some sign of the coming of the Steamer.

The sou'wester that for almost five days had been continuously breaking on the rocky shores of the westerly ends of Isle Royale, at this time gave no sign of abatement. About an hour later, the horizon in the north-west disclosed rapidly advancing clouds. In a very short time, these clouds with a considerable breeze from the same quarter, and a sprinkle of rain, suggested the advisability of seeking shelter, and the necessity of the Captain and Mate returning to Double Island to look after their camp, boats and provisions. Good-byes were hurriedly spoken, and the Chaplain and Steward left on the dock to await the arrival of the belated Steamer.

Upon reaching camp all was secured against the threatening rainstorm. During the mid-day meal, the whistle of the Easton was heard, advising the crew of two that the semi-circumnavigators would soon be on their way to Tobin Harbor. The regular scheduled route of the Steamer being along the South Shores of Isle Royale, the Captain and the Mate, scrambled through the forest on Double Island to an elevation near the south entrance to Washington Harbor to get a glimpse of their departing comrades when the Easton would pass through the narrow channel connecting Washington Harbor with Grace Harbor on the South. The departing signal of the steamer was heard, but no steamer passed through the channel. The crew of two concluded that the Captain of the Easton had abandoned the scheduled route, and headed his boat for the north shores of the Island to avoid the south-west

rollers, this course promising a smoother voyage for his passengers. This we later learned was the fact, being told that there were quite a number of sea-sick passengers aboard, the steamer having experienced heavy seas before reaching Washington Harbor.

Again returning to the Camp, it was decided to make preparations for an early departure for the south shores of Isle Royale, to leave all unnecessary cargo, lighten the launch by transferring much that it had carried to the tow, and that thus it was possible, since the nor'wester was still breaking the crests of the sou'west rollers, for the boats and crew to at least reach Long Point, nine miles away. Everything having been made snug in the launch, and in the tow, provisions, boxes and other not needed articles discarded, the tow was shoved out into the bay, where it was picked up by the crew and securely fastened to the launch with 40 feet of tow line.

The start was made at 4:01pm on Friday August 21. In a few moments the sailors were riding the sou'west rollers. The course taken in passing through Grace Harbor being nearly direct S.W. The mariners were too much occupied in looking ahead, in watching the tow and getting into their slickers to admire the grandeur of the dashing of the waters, against the steep cliffs and short gravel beaches on the shores of this Harbor. The newly built Government Lighthouse on the Rock of Ages, three miles out from the Harbor was sighted and soon left behind.

Passing well outside the reefs extending into the Lake at the South Point (Cumberland Point) of Grace Harbor, that were well marked by the seething mass of foam from the swells breaking over them, we rounded the South Point of Grace Harbor about 2 miles off shore. From this point we ran partly in and partly across the trough of the sea made by the incoming rollers from the sou'west that were somewhat broken at the crests by the nor'wester blowing across them. When in these rollers the towering shores of the Island two to four hundred feet in height were sometimes not visible from the launch. The length of the waves may be approximated from the fact that the launch, tow line, and row-boat, 72 feet in length in passing across the swells was often between the wavecrests. The beaches of the next southerly bay known as Rainbow Cove, were almost hidden by the surf of the breaking waves.

The mariners debated some as to putting in at Long Point about nine miles from the starting point, but when opposite this point, as it would require careful and tedious steering to make the landing nearly two miles distant, it was decided to continue on the course for some more available landing farther up the Coast and endeavor to make "Fishermen's Home" about eleven miles further on.

The boats were riding easier now, the highlands of the Island to some extent sheltering the navigators from the nor'wester, and the sou'west rollers bowling them merrily along. They ran thus for another hour, when the surface of the water gave indications of a wind coming from a different direction.

Presently, a threatening mass of dark, fast-moving clouds appeared from over the heights of the Island Shore, apprising the sailors that a storm from the nor'east was about to cross their course. This nor'easter with a beating rain for an hour kept the navigators and everything in the launch well moistened, creating also as against the sou'west rollers a choppy sea.

When this unexpected local storm had spent its force, the sailors were nearing the vicinity of "Fishermen's Home", situated upon a spit of land and rock extending into the Lake parallel to the main shore of the Island, not far from the westerly entrance to Siskowit Bay.

The ledges of rocks, islets, reefs and shoals extending easterly into the Lake from opposite Point Houghton, some seven miles in extent, separating Siskowit Bay from the Lake, were seen in the distance. Menagerie Island one of this group being the site of Isle Royale Light, also called Menagerie Island Light.

The crew of two after debating whether to proceed on the voyage for the home port steering across the waters during the coming night by the Menagerie Island Light, concluded to put in at "Fishermen's Home", get warmed up, fill the fuel tank, and make the decision when there.

Darkness had settled on the waters intensified by the cloudy sky. It was quite a run to avoid shoals and rocks in order to reach the little harbor lying back of the spit. The inlet between the spit and the main land was found to be narrow, the darkness rendering it impossible to determine the depth of water ahead. Just as the fishing village came in view, running slow, the keel of the boat touched the gravel bottom. Lights on shore, (the villagers having heard the approach of the launch) directed us to the landing. A supper in a warm room and the offer of the storeroom floor for a bed soon settled the question about going farther on. The landing was made at 7:30pm.

When the sailors gave an account of themselves and informed the interrogators that the little boats had come from Washington Harbor since four o'clock that afternoon, the Norwegian fishermen appeared incredulous, saying that they did not see how we did it, as they had been caught out in their fishing boats during that afternoon's storm. The row boat seemed to take their eye, they examined it, and expressed admiration for its construction and lines. That the little

launch should be able to make the run with its tow, without any mishap in the sea the boats had passed through was a subject of comment.

Our host Mr. Idius Seglem, on learning that we were from Scoville Point and that we knew Rheinhardt became an old friend.

CHAPTER VII — HOMEWARD BOUND — SISKOWIT BAY — THE FOREST FIRE — THE IMPATIENT TOW — THE HOME PORT.

The Captain, no doubt having in mind a possible surprise of a string of brook trout for the Chaplain, suggested a run to Wright Island, lying nearly opposite to the starting point of the trail leading to Siskowit Lake on the mainland.

Inquiring of the Finns, it was learned that a party from Duluth had been there the preceding week and caught brook trout by the hundreds. Since they left a forest fire had been raging for two days near the trail to the Lake.

It was surmised that this fire resulted from carelessness on the part of the members of this party in failing to properly guard and extinguish their campfires.

The voyagers got under way at 6:35am on Saturday, August 22. The quiet waters in the little haven were soon left behind. The navigators entered the Strait to Siskowit Bay at Point Houghton where the dense mass of smoke back of Wright Island seven miles away became visible. This suggested the advisability of abandoning the project of the Captain for a piscatorial investigation. The bow of the launch was thereupon headed for the indistinctly visible south shore of Isle Royale beyond the easterly entrance to Siskowit Bay. "Him" commenced to blow. "Him" increased the blow. "Him" blew more and more from the sou'west. When about opposite Menagerie Island Light the tow became impatient at the slow progress of the launch and under the impact of the variable westerly breezes attempted to overtake its leader, necessitating the lengthening of the tow line from 40 feet to 80 feet, which extension was speedily effected.

Nearing Chippewa Harbor, a large gasoline boat, which proved to be "The City of Two Harbors" was discovered hugging the shore, westward bound, about one and one-half miles on our port side. She seemed to be laboring in the adverse wind.

After passing the entrance to Chippewa Harbor well out, and when about opposite Lea Cove, the sailors decided to no longer keep the usual course along the shore to the old Rock Harbor Light, but to steer across the open Lake to Smithwick Channel. This course was then taken through a choppy sea, with an abundance of spray over our

port side.

Entering Rock Harbor, through Smithwick Channel, it took but a short time to reach Scoville Point, rounding which we tied up at our home port, the little dock back of the Cliff in Tobin Harbor at 11:45 on Saturday, August 22, 1908.

Thus the cruise of the circumnavigators ended.

35¢



The WOLF'S EYE Press

a division of the

ISLE ROYALE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Isle Royale National Park

via: Houghton, Michigan