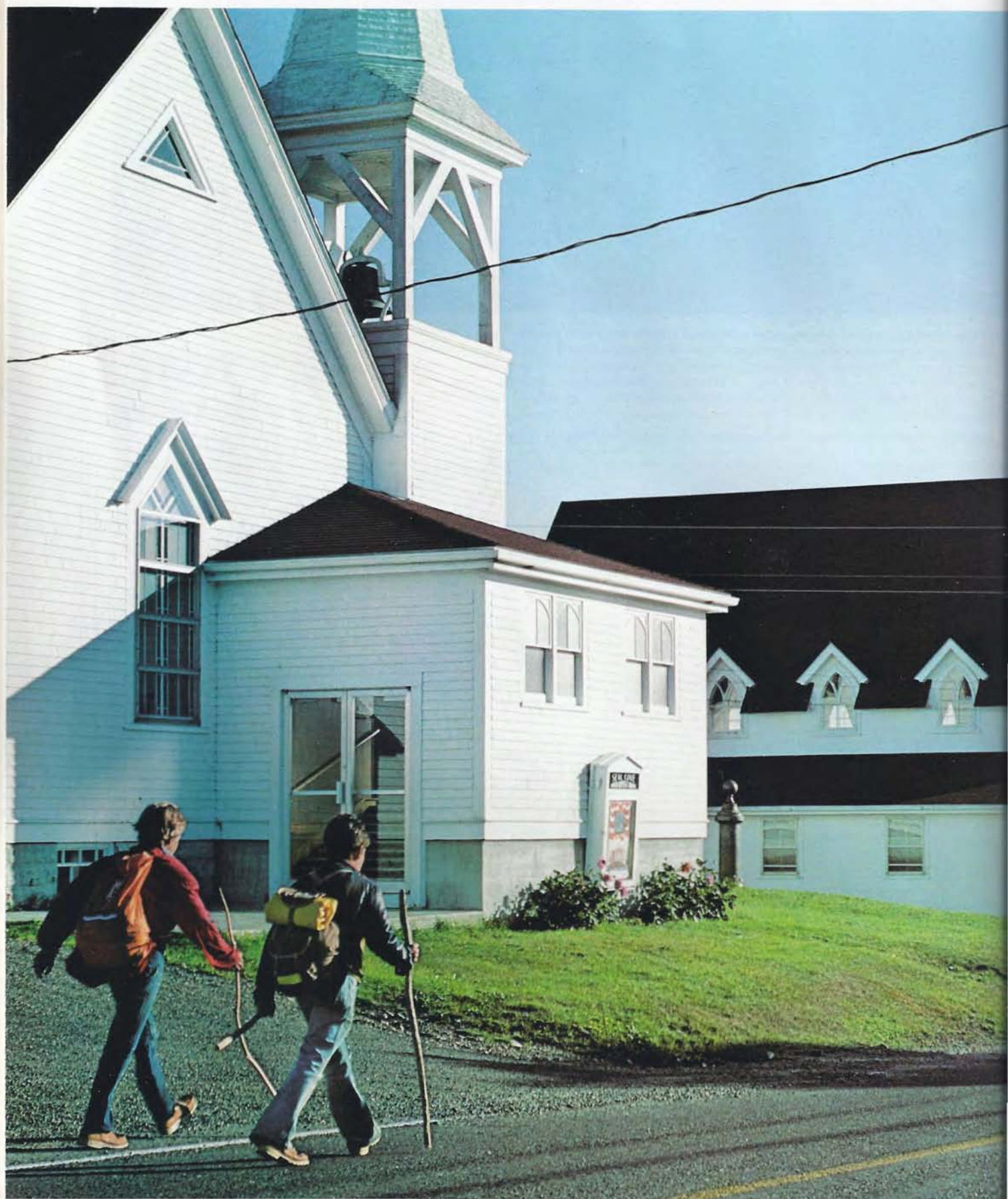


Grand Manan: A Walk



with Bed & Board

Article and
Photographs
by ALLAN POSPISIL

Tucked into the Bay of Fundy eight miles off the coast of Maine, the New Brunswick island of Grand Manan offers country roads, seashore scenery and comfortable accommodations to the walker who, like the hiker, disowns mechanized travel—but not civilization.

WE COULD HEAR THE ISLAND before we saw it—a queer electric whistle sounding a high thin echo to the traditional bass blast of the ferry. The ship's horn began blowing about 30 minutes out, and its first powerful note took the boys by surprise—they had been fooling around on the forward deck, just beneath the speaker—and sent them scurrying inside, hands clapped over their ears. They found me sitting with a gnarled and elderly man who tended the fires in one of the smokehouses on the island. Through bites of his cheese sandwich, which he ground between his gums, he told me that the island fishes for herring, smokes herring, and lately has been selling most of its herring to Poland.



The Grand Harbour Inn (above) is typical of the modest, comfortable accommodations on Grand Manan. After a real breakfast—not granola and powdered milk—the author's son Craig, on the lower step, and friend Brand Livingstone pause for a rest before continuing their trip south along the island's eastern coast and through Seal Cove (left).

"Can't say why," he said, "but they're paying the best now. Been smoking herring all my life; should be retired but I ain't. Some young fellows started a smokehouse a while back, had troubles. So I'm working it now. You going through Grand Harbour?" I said we were, in a day or two. "Well, you stop in, I'll show you around. Talk to anyone on the island," he said, "ask them anything. Everyone's friendly."

THERE WERE 31 CARS ON board—the boys had counted—and no room for more. It was Sunday, and there is only one ferry from Black's Harbour, New Brunswick, to Grand Manan, somewhere ahead in the fog. To the island's west lay Grand Manan Channel and the coast of Maine; to the east, the Bay of Fundy and Nova Scotia.

None of the cars on board was ours. The plan—my plan, really, the boys stuck with it—was to walk Grand Manan, some 20 miles long by road and beach and trail, 15 by crow flight. We would be self-propelled but not self-sufficient. I was not above relying on what limited commercial hospitality—inn, hotel, cottage—the island offered. Indeed, I counted on it, and our packs were lighter for the things we didn't have to carry—tents, sleeping bags, food and cooking gear.

The two boys were excited and enthusiastic. But what if the fog condensed into something more liquid, or if they found the walking—four days of it, from one end of the island to the other

and back—too dull?

Craig, my son, was 13 and certainly strong enough for the hike, but his eagerness became genuine only when I suggested inviting a friend. Brand Livingstone was 12 and robust, but when he said yes, he didn't ask how far we would walk, he just wanted to know would Craig be along.

WHEN WE WALKED ON BOARD THE FERRY at Black's Harbour the sky was merely overcast. Halfway there, the overcast fell to the sea. I knew of Grand Manan's tendency to shroud itself in fog, had been warned that the island was often dismally blanketed for days, and wanted to experience something of that. The forecast was for clearing weather the following day and maybe the day after.

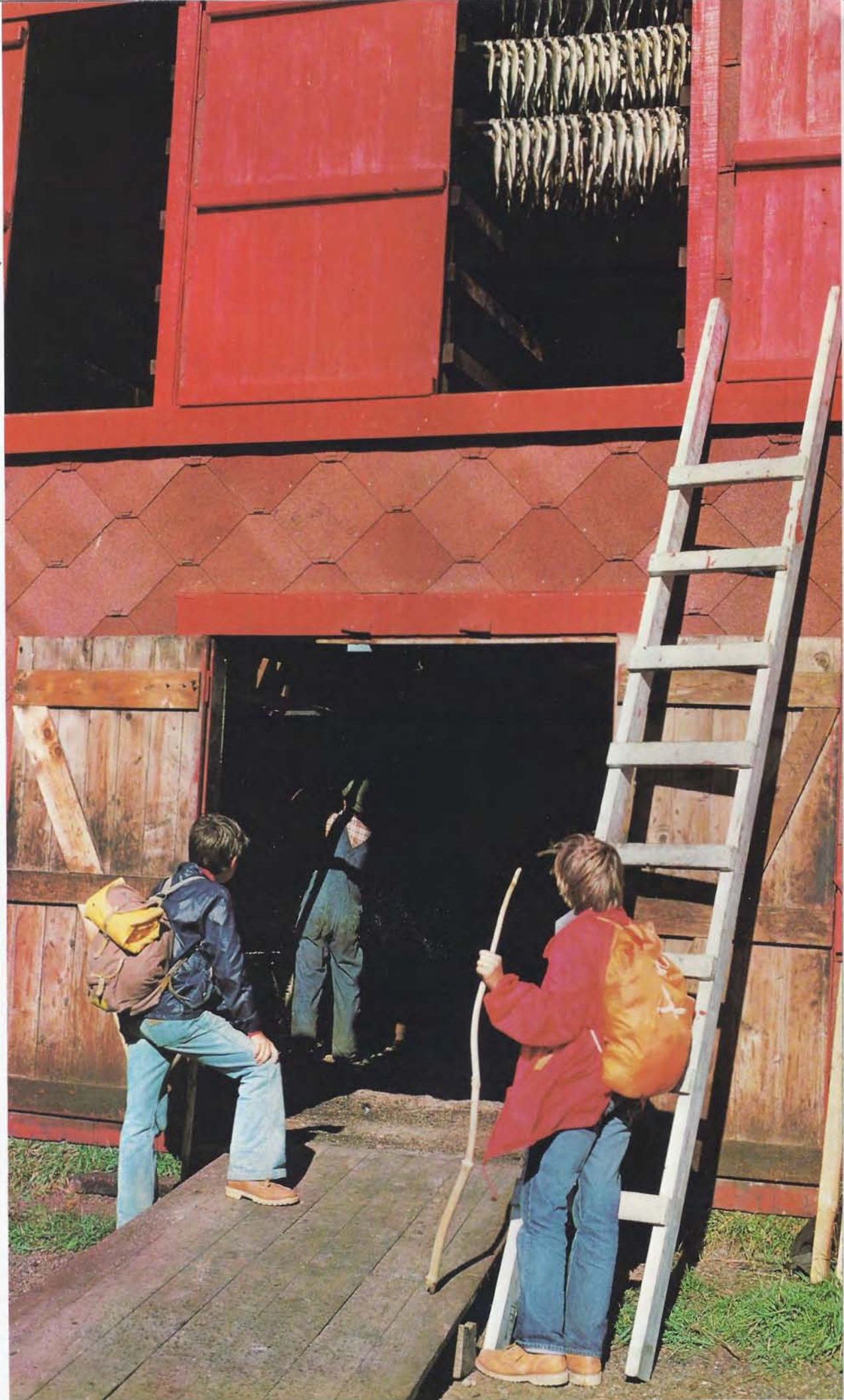
We walked off the ferry into the village of North Head, Grand Manan's main port. Most of the island's fishing fleet ties up there.

On foot we made for the Marathon Hotel, hardly a half-mile from the landing. It was a several story Victorian affair, built in 1871, and with the fog swirling about I could imagine no cozier accommodation. Dinner was at six, giving us three hours to explore. We broke out raingear and headed for Swallow Tail, a point of land near North Head but practically pinched off from the island. There was a lighthouse there, the source of that strange electric whistle.

Swallow Tail is reached by a narrow wooden bridge high



Through the fog-shrouded wet grass of Swallow Tail, a narrow point off North Head, the boys head toward the coast and wave-battered cliffs on their first day on Grand Manan. Two days later (right) they inspect a herring smokehouse at Seal Cove. Poland is now the major buyer of Grand Manan's herring catch, the island's principal export commodity.



over a gorge that falls away nearly to sea level, the bridge like a stitch clasping the point to the main body of land. From the bridge we could see only as far as a path leading up a grassy slope. As we walked up the path, first a shed, then a residence and at the end of a boardwalk the lighthouse itself came into view. The sea, gray like the fog, lay at the edge of rock cliffs.

We clambered over the cliffs to throw stones into the sea. We followed paths that wound through wet grass leading to more cliffs. Everything was moist green and gray, all blends and no edges. Even the whistle sounded blurred and so did the occasional muted chug of marine diesel engines passing by on the water. They sounded so close we stood and stared into the fog after them, but never saw one.

There was time to walk part of a wooded trail from Swallow Tail to Whale Cove, and we came across the Grand Manan version of a trail blaze—a lobster trap with a splash of red paint.

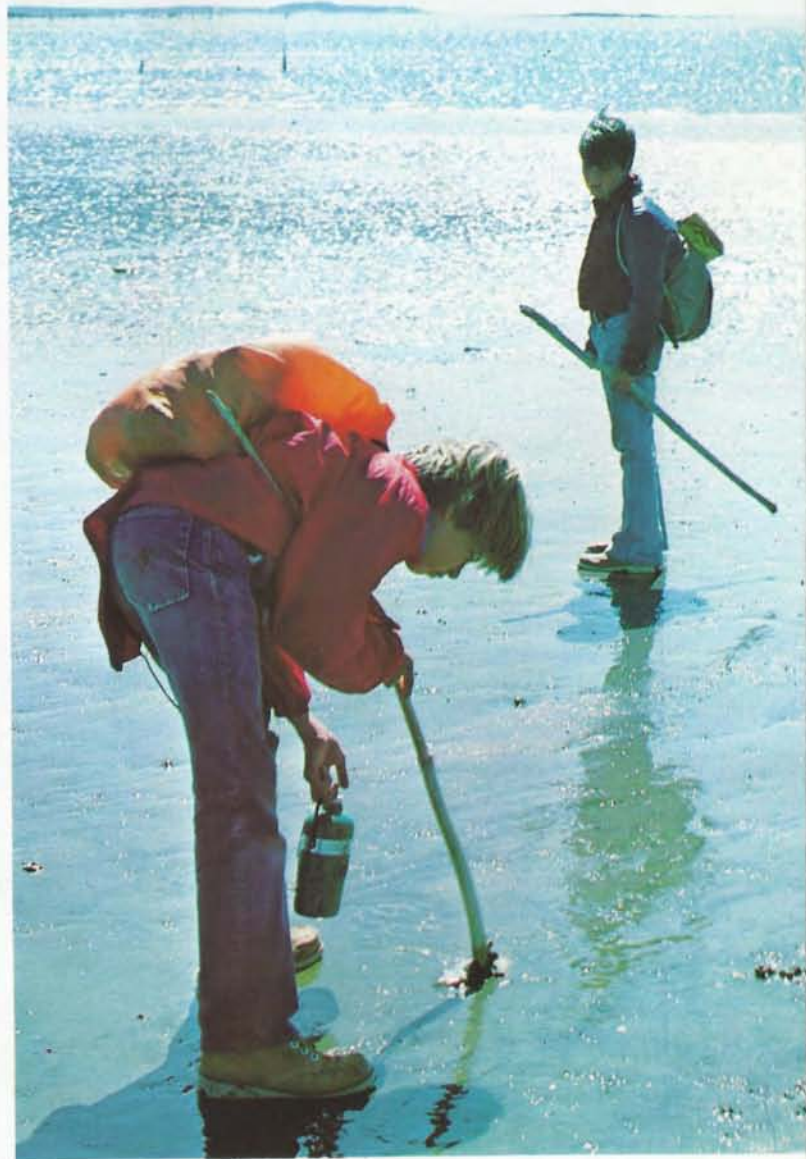
We stood later on the wharf at North Head. The last of the

herring seiners was just leaving. Out every Sunday, back by Friday—that's the rhythm to which the island moves, year-round in almost any kind of weather. It was pleasant to be standing on the wharf in the softness of the fog, watching the last boat disappear into it; better, we thought, than being a fisherman and watching the wharf disappear.

For dinner the Marathon Hotel stuffed us with roast beef, fiddleheads, mashed potatoes, hot apple pie and ice cream. Later we settled in a comfortable living room, and I browsed through the library. What better entertainment on a damp night than the bookshelves of an inn where the collection leans toward local history? On Grand Manan that meant shipwrecks, and I read about the schooner *Lord Ashburton*, which was bound for St. John in a winter gale in 1857 but found the rocks of Grand Manan instead; 21 men died.

A heavy rain began to fall, and the hotelkeeper said that in the previous month, July, there had been 20 consecutive days





From the wharf at North Head, where the herring fleet docked, to the bridge clasping Swallow Tail to the body of the island, to the mud flats at Long Beach, Craig and Brand found much to see and do, although sunbathing was not included. The island has been known to have 20 consecutive days of fog.

of fog.

Sometime in the night a single crack of thunder shook me awake, and I listened awhile to rain rattling on the roof. The boys slept on. I did not yearn for a sleeping bag and tent.

GRAND MANAN IS ALIGNED ON a north-south axis, and although the island is narrow—five miles at the broadest point—it is, geologically speaking, a split personality. Sea level on the eastern shore is a succession of beaches and mud flats, coves and harbors. All of the island's 3,000 residents live along this mostly hospitable coast. By contrast, the island's west side, including the northern and southern headlands, is a forbidding place. Spectacular cliffs with organ-pipe faces rise 200 to 400 feet from the water, capped by thick dark forest. No one lives on this side of the island. There are no roads paralleling this coast.

Our itinerary kept us to the villages along the east shore where we could find accommodations and meals. Each day we walked at least eight miles to our next lodging, and as the days progressed so did we, quickening our pace. On the first day,

from North Head south to Grand Harbour, we started out in a drizzle and wearing rain suits. But the drizzle quit, the clouds thinned and we gradually shed our rain pants and jackets. Since we were walking through civilization we partook of its pleasures, stopping for bottles of Orange Crush pulled chilled and dripping from grocery coolers.

The entire time we were in sight of the sea. The tide was out, exposing long reaches of mud. We walked by homes where women were tending prolific flower gardens. Virtually every yard had some flowers—color to store up against the days of persistent fog.

And we were offered lifts, enough so that we began a count. Number Four was a minister who asked, "Are you still enjoying your walk, or would you like a ride?"

"We'll walk on a bit," I said and he suggested a turnoff just ahead which would take us to the shore. "I often walk there," he said. "You'll like it." The shore route took us into the village of Woodward's Cove by the back door and brought us the first rich odor of herring being smoked.

We reached our lodging, the small Grand Harbour Inn, in midafternoon. The next day, hiking just as far to a cottage a couple of miles past Seal Cove, we flew. Sometimes Craig set the pace, sometimes Brand, but it was fast enough so that by noon we were unlocking our door. That was the halfway point; the next day we would turn around and walk north. Although there was some backtracking to do, there were enough alternate routes so that it would be unnecessary to retrace our paths step for step.

After we checked in at the Grand Harbour Inn, I dropped the boys at a municipal swimming pool close by. The sun was strong now, and I walked on a bit.

My informant on the ferry had spoken of the friendliness of the island people, and as I strolled along proof appeared. A man plowing a fallow field by the side of his house hopped off his tractor when he saw me approach. He stuck out a hand and said, "How do you do? I'm Gordon Foster. It's a beautiful view, isn't it? Least it is when the fog lifts. That's Ross Island, and over there, White Head Island. On a good day you can see Nova Scotia from this hill. It's 40 miles, but you can see it."

Mr. Foster squinted in the sun, looking for Nova Scotia, and pointed out some other landmarks—lighthouses, offshore islands, the distant Gannet Rock and lighthouse.

"I was game warden here for some years," he said, "and maybe just a bit of an outlaw." Smiling, "Takes one to catch one, they figured. Besides, I knew the island better than anyone. There's some deer on the island, ducks, partridge . . . but they're annihilating them. Any time you come by again, stop in for a cup of tea." And he went back to his tractor and his crop of stones.

THERE'S A SMALL MUSEUM in Grand Harbour, and an old log from the Gannet lighthouse lay open to the entry of exactly 100 years earlier—August 18, 1876. The keeper had reported a light west wind at midnight, the air clear after five days of fog; but at 5:00 A.M., fog again, the wind variable.

From our cottage below Seal Cove we made for the very southern tip of the island and its lighthouse. The marked contrast between the two coasts of Grand Manan begins at South Head, and we found ourselves on a high open perch, able to see for the first time the tall cliffs standing away to the north. We walked carefully, for the trail skirts the very edge of the cliffs: waves washed against them 200 feet below.

We faced a long hike of three to four miles back to the cottage, but found some diversion at a small cove where we stopped to watch three seals swimming

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SIDPOCKET

Light information on Grand Manan to tuck into the sidepocket of your pack.

MAPS

Topographical maps on Grand Manan are available from: Canada Map Office, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 615 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3, Canada.



FERRY INFORMATION

The ferry for Grand Manan leaves from Black's Harbour, New Brunswick. For a schedule, contact: Coastal Transport Limited, P.O. Box 26, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada (506 657-3306).

NOTES, NAMES AND A MUSEUM

The island's name is the French derivative of the Indian word *menane*, meaning "island place," which first appeared on a map drawn by Samuel de Champlain

in 1607. Over the years the island has been claimed by France, Great Britain and the United States. In 1817 claims were settled, and the United States deeded the island to England in exchange for Moose Island, Maine.

John James Audubon probably was Grand Manan's first tourist. In 1833 he went there to study the island's birds, a fine collection of which may be seen at the Grand Manan Museum, operated by the Historical Society, in Grand Harbour.

The birds on display were not picked randomly; only those that actually visit Grand Manan are displayed. The island's life list numbers more than 275 species, so the collection is sizable. Lobstering is important to the island (although in Canada the season is closed during the summer), and the museum has mounted a small replica of a workshop that makes lobster traps. Traps are shown at successive stages of construction. A portion of the museum is devoted to the study of local geology. Since a fault line divides the dissimilar east and west coasts, there's a lot to learn.

The Historical Society's own magazine can be purchased at the museum; on sale, too, is a map of the island pinpointing the dozens of ships that have gone down off Grand Manan.

For more information on Grand Manan, contact: Tourism New Brunswick, P.O. Box 12345, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5H1, Canada (506 453-2377).

Grand Manan

Continued from page 28

close enough to a herring weir to be contemplating supper. Weirs surround Grand Manan; they can be seen from almost any point that overlooks the shore. Birch saplings driven into the muddy bottom in the shape of a lollipop form the frame from which netting is hung. A well-kept weir in a choice spot is a valuable asset, sold like real estate, willed from generation to generation. A 1939 map of Grand Manan, which I found in a New York library, locates and names 86 weirs—including Hardtack, Turnip Patch, Black Prince, King George, Grit, Try Again.

We cooked out that night, grilling hot dogs on the beach, telling ghost stories by the fire. Later I gave instruction in seven-card stud and blackjack.

On our way back through Seal Cove the next morning we paused to visit a herring cannery. Women chopped off heads and tails, packed the plump bodies three to a can, and slid the cans on trays in one swift move; the fish kept coming, the women kept chopping. Next door men were stringing whole "green" herring, slipping them one by one on long sticks, racking the sticks in a smokehouse, packing it nearly to the roof. In two months—kip-pers.

The boys enjoyed excursions like that, and so did I. Long hikes on the mud flats and scrambling along the rocks at the high-water line rated good marks, too. Along the paved roads, however, with cars flying by, fatigue became a factor, and the boys questioned my contention that the walking was more important than the arriving. By now, more than a dozen motorists had offered us rides. Stubborn, I refused them all. The last two miles back to the Grand Harbour Inn were marched in grim silence.

There, Brand had a choice. His mother and younger brother had arrived on the island—in a car—from their summer home in Calais, Maine, to visit neighbors vacationing on Grand Manan. He could stay with them in a seaside cottage near North Head, or hike on with us. I had in mind our longest day yet—a dash across the island to the west coast and back.

Brand decided: enough walking. Counting side trips and longer shoreline routes, he probably had made 25 miles in three days. Craig might have used Brand's departure as a wedge for his own defection, and I half expected some hints in that direction. But there were none ("I thought about it," he admitted later), so early the next morning he and I started off on a road that led across the island to Dark Harbour, the only real break in the long reach of cliffs.

By a little fancy rationalization I announced we would accept lifts now because we finally had a destination more

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important than the traveling. And the faster we got there the more we could poke around and look for other routes back across the island and to North Head. We didn't go so far as to extend our thumbs, but we managed two rides. Our second was in a pickup whose driver mentioned a trail, cut the previous winter, that followed the cliff line from Dark Harbour all the way to the Whistle, a lighthouse at the far northern tip of Grand Manan. That was the ticket, I thought. A long way around, but from the Whistle there was a road angling across to North Head.

A natural stone dike encloses Dark Harbour, which isn't a harbor at all. It's fed by a freshwater stream and a tidal flow that washes in and out over a spillway in the dike.

We ate a sandwich lunch and started off for the Whistle. The trail went straight up through a slope of shadowy spruce, but when we reached the top we came out in sunlight. We had an afternoon of unlimited visibility. Perhaps if we had been looking east we could have seen Nova Scotia. As we looked west, the Maine coast stood out clearly across seven miles of water, and far inland I could see the outline of Mount Katahdin. The view at our feet had some interest, too—the drop fell away as much as 400 feet to the water.

EVEN THOUGH WE WERE NEVER more than three miles from the roads and villages of the eastern shore, the places where we were walking could have passed for wilderness. We moved through thick forests, crossed running streams, picked wild raspberries and tramped across high openings where ferns grew waist-high. We skirted a beaver pond and watched an eagle soaring a hundred feet below us along the face of the cliffs.

I had thought two hours would bring us to the Whistle, but I hadn't counted on the trail detouring inland as much as it did to skirt sizable cuts where streams ran to the sea. After three hours Craig began to fade, but when we leaned out from one high lookout and saw the lighthouse a mile ahead, he shouted, "Civilization!" and loped the distance. From there it was still another three miles over an up-and-down road to a room for the night, this time a motel in North Head. It was a wearying walk—even with our two rides I estimated we had tramped ten miles—and we got just a bit silly, the way you do sometimes when the top of one hill reveals yet another hill to climb. But oh, did we finally eat and sleep!

THERE IS ONE CAMPGROUND ON Grand Manan, called the Anchorage. Craig, Brand and I passed through on our third day, heading north. A couple of trailers were parked there and a few tents with four-door sedans stood by. Where did we

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fit, I wondered, in the hierarchy of campers and backpackers? Somewhere below the carry-your-own-food-and-shelter troops, yes; but in truth I didn't think of ourselves as backpackers. We were just out walking, following a path or road from village to village and inn to inn, steering a course that sought rather than avoided encounters with the ports of civilization. There is some historical precedent for that sort of travel (one thinks of English poets), not to mention at day's end those pleasing little touches that civilization can be so good at providing—hot water, soft beds and someone else to make the dinner. ♣

Montana Divide

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roamed these mountains. More than likely they were looking for game just as their ancestors had for 11,000 years before them. We'd already seen evidence of these ancient hunters: small chips of obsidian, the hard, black, glassy volcanic rock which the Indians found in what is now Yellowstone Park and which they prized as a fine material for tools.

The chilly wind that whipped across the summit wasn't conducive for musing, however, so we headed out toward Crater Lake. The last few miles that day were tough because the trail followed a long series of camel humps along the ridge. Arriving at the top of each hump, we expected to see the lake, only to discover at least one more hump. It was after six when we descended the final one and plopped down on the shore of tiny Crater Lake.

We celebrated that night. We had come ten miles and had gained almost 4,000 feet in elevation. We were finally on top of Gallatin Divide, and the significance of that fact came out as Ralph unrolled his new tent.

"You know, Sam, I spent hours reading catalogs before deciding to get this thing. I think the time I spent helped me buy a good mountain tent. I know it kept my mind off a lot that was going on over there. Everything was all so hush-hush, and I was working with the grim statistics—body counts and that sort of thing. We were in a little compound which we couldn't leave. All I could do for exercise and to blow off steam was run around the fenced-in perimeter of the place."

Then in a quiet voice he added, "This is the antithesis of it, Sam."

We celebrated by taking in the silence and the scenery and by drinking copious amounts of tea.

THEN RALPH FOUND THE NOTES. They were stuck in the hollow log he was using for a backrest, and they'd been left there by members of the Montana Outdoor Leadership Expedition. They spoke of blistered feet, bad weather, good camp-