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THE ROMANCE OF THE GREAT LAKES

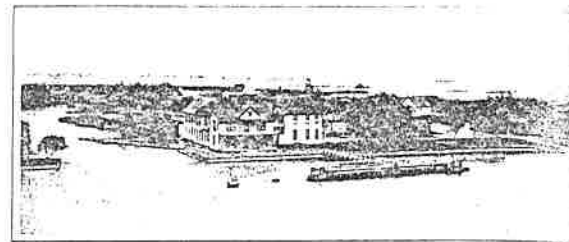
III.—PASSENGER TRAFFIC AND SUMMER LIFE

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

The first two of Mr. Curwood's articles on "The Romance of the Great Lakes" appeared in the January and February numbers of the *Reader* magazine. In the first of these, "The Building of the Ships," he tells of the enormous traffic of our Inland Seas, and of the gigantic ship-building industry that has developed along them, and how the traffic of these "seas," because of cheap freight rates, saves the country \$50,000,000 yearly—a "dividend of six dollars for every man, woman and child in the United States." In his second article, "What the Ships Carry," he shows in detail how this great saving is brought about, and devotes most of his space to the commerce in grain, which comprised nearly one half of the hundred million tons of freight carried on the Lakes last year. "Picture a train of forty-ton freight cars loaded to capacity," he says, "the engine and caboose both in New York City, yet extending in an unbroken line all the way around the earth—a train reaching along a parallel from New York to San Francisco, across the Pacific, the Chinese Empire, Turkestan, Persia, the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic,—and you have an idea of what the ships of the Great Lakes carry during a single eight-months season of navigation. This train would not only girdle the earth, but there would be 2,000 miles of it left over. Were it to pass you at a given place at twenty miles an hour, you would have to stand forty days and forty nights to see the end of it." Mr. Curwood's second article on "What the Ships Carry" will appear in July.—THE EDITORS.

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Not on F drive



LITTLE VENICE, ST. CLAIR RIVER, SHOWING A TYPICAL LOW-PRICED SUMMER RESORT



In a previous article I have shown how the saving to the people of the United States by reason of Great Lake freight transportation is more than five hundred million dollars a year, or, in other words, an indirect "dividend" to the nation of six dollars for every man, woman and child in it. Yet in describing how this enormous saving was accomplished I touched upon but one phase of what I might term the "saving power" of the Lakes. To this must be added that dividend of millions of dollars which indirectly goes into the pockets of the people because of the cheapness of water transportation and because of the extraordinarily low cost at which one may enjoy, both afloat and ashore, the summer life of the Lakes. These two phases of Lake life are among the least known, and have been most neglected.

At the same time, considering the health and pleasure as well as the profit of the nation, they are among the most important. To-day it is almost unknown outside of Lake cities that one may travel on the inland seas at less cost per mile than on any other waterway in the civilized world, and that the pleasure-seeker in New York, for instance, can travel a thousand miles westward, spend a month along the Lakes, and return to his home no more out of pocket than if he had indulged in a ten-day or two-

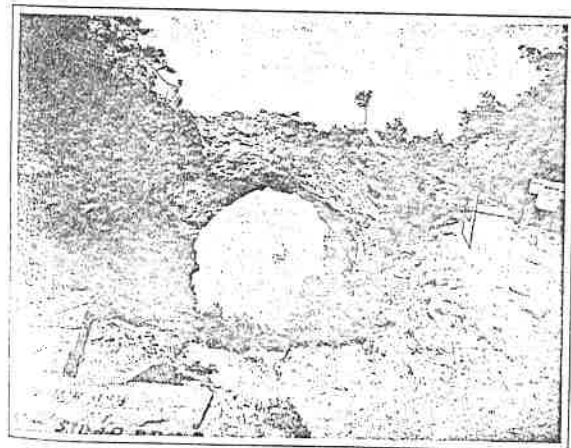
week holiday at some sea-coast resort within a hundred miles of his business. This might be accepted with some hesitancy by many were there not convincing figures behind the statements, figures which show that the Lakes are primarily the "poor man's pleasure grounds" as well as his roads of travel, and that on them he may ride in company with millionaires and dine with the scions of luxury and fashion without overreaching himself financially. This has been called the democracy of the Lakes. And only those who have travelled on the inland seas or summered along their shores know what the term really means. It is a condition which exists nowhere else in the world on such a large scale. It means that what President Roosevelt describes as "the ideal American life" has been achieved on the Lakes; that the bank clerk is on a level, both socially and financially, for the time, with the bank president, with the same opportunities for pleasure and with the same luxuries of public travel within his reach. The "multi-millionaire" who boards one of the magnificent passenger steamers at Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, or Chicago, or any other Lake port, has no promenade decks set apart for himself and others of his class, as on ocean vessels; there are no first, second, and third class specifications, no dining-rooms for the especial use of aristocrats, no privileges that they may enjoy alone. The elect of fortune and fashion becomes a common American as soon as he

touches a plank of a Lake vessel, rubs elbows with the everyday crowd, smokes his cigars in company with travelling men, rural merchants, and clerks, forgets himself in this mingling with people of red blood and working hands—and enjoys himself in the experience. It is a novel adventure for the man who has been accustomed to the purchase of exclusiveness and the service of a prince at sea, but it quickly shows him what life really is along the five great waterways that form the backbone of the commerce of the American nation.

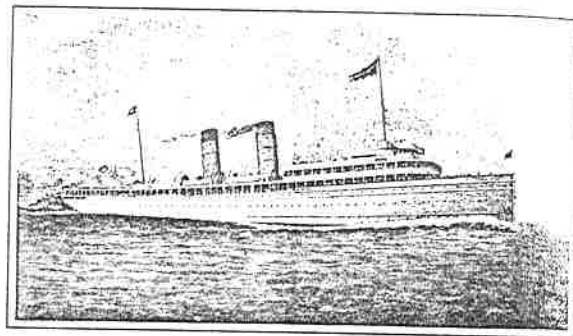
This is why the passenger traffic of the inland seas is distinctive, why it is the absolute antithesis of the same traffic on the oceans. If a \$5,000,000 floating palace were to be launched upon the Lakes to-morrow and its owners announced that social and money distinctions would be recognized on board, the business of that vessel would probably be run at a loss that would mean ultimate bank-

ruptcy. It is an experiment which even the wealthiest and most powerful passenger corporations on the Lakes have not dared to make, though they have frequently discussed it. A score of passenger traffic men have told me this. It is a splendid tribute to the spirit of independence and equality that exists on these American waters.

And there is a good reason for this spirit. Last year sixteen million passengers travelled on Lake vessels, and of these it is estimated that less than five hundred thousand were foreign tourists or pleasure-seekers from large Eastern cities. In other words, over fifteen million of these travellers were men and women of the Lake and central Western States, where independence and equality are matters of habit. Twelve million were carried by vessels of the Eighth District, which begins at Detroit and ends at Chicago, while only three and a half million were carried in the Ninth



MAC KINAC ISLAND, ONE OF THE NATURAL WONDERS OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION

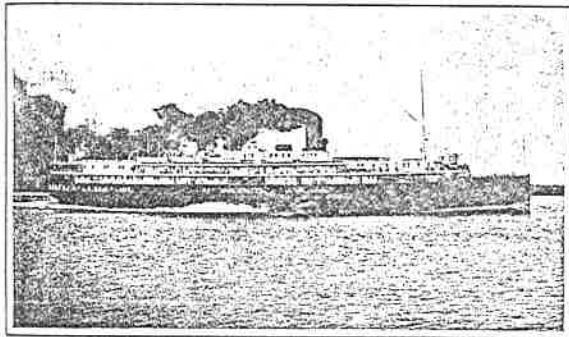


THE "NORTHWEST," ONE OF THE FINEST PASSENGER STEAMSHIPS ON THE GREAT LAKES

District, including all Lake ports east of the Detroit River. From these figures one may easily get an idea of the class of people who travel on the Lakes, and at the same time realize to what an almost inconceivable extent our inland seas are neglected by the people of many States within short distances of them. Astonishing as it may seem, nearly eight million passengers were reported at Detroit last year—as many as were reported at all other Lake ports combined, including great cities like Buffalo, Cleveland and Chicago. These millions were drawn almost entirely from Michigan and Ontario, with a small percentage coming from Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. Ninety per cent. of the Chicago traffic of two million was from Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin, while of the three and a half million carried east of the Detroit River, from Erie and Ontario ports, fully two thirds were residents of Ohio and Pennsylvania. At Buffalo, which draws upon the entire State of New York and upon all States east thereof, there were reported only a million passengers! To sum up, figures gathered during the year show that fully ninety per cent. of all travel on the inland seas is furnished by the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin Minnesota, western New York,

western Pennsylvania, and northern Kentucky.

Why is this? Why are the most beautiful fresh-water seas in the whole world neglected by their own people? Why is it that from the single city of Boston there travel by water two million more people than on all of the Lakes combined, which number on their shores the second largest city on the continent and four others well up in the front rank? I have asked this question of steamship companies in a dozen ports along the Lakes, and from them all I have received practically the same reply. There is a man in Detroit who has been in the passenger traffic business for more than a quarter of a century. I refer to A. A. Schantz, general manager of the largest passenger business on the Lakes. He was managing boats at the age of twenty, he has studied the business for thirty years, and he hits the nail squarely on the head when he says: "It's because people don't know about the Lakes. For generations newspapers and magazines have talked ocean to them. They know more about Bermuda and the Caribbean than they do about Mackinaw and the three thousand islands of Lake Huron. The people of three States out of four are better acquainted with steamship fares to London and Liverpool than to Duluth



THE "WESTERN STATES," ONE OF THE LARGEST AND FASTEST BOATS ON THE LAKES
This vessel sometimes carries 2500 passengers, at a speed of twenty miles an hour

or Chicago; they have been taught to look to the oceans and ocean resorts, and to-day the five Great Lakes of America are more foreign, so far as knowledge of them is concerned, than either the Atlantic or the Pacific."

This is true. When Admiral Dewey made his triumphal journey through the inland seas even he found himself constantly expressing astonishment at what he saw and heard. It is so with ninety-nine out of every hundred strangers who come to them. Think, for instance, of travelling from Detroit to Buffalo, a distance of two hundred and sixty miles, for \$1.25!—that half a cent a mile! I recently knew a Philadelphia man who has been to Europe half a dozen times about as cheap travel, and he laughingly said: "What kind of tubs do you have on the Lakes that can afford to carry passengers at these ridiculous rates?"

There is one particular "tub" which offers this cheap transportation week, which cost a little over a hundred and a quarter dollars! Every piece of woodwork in the staterooms, promenades and dining rooms is Mexican mahogany. It carries a collection of oil paintings worth twenty-five thousand dollars. Every one of four hundred

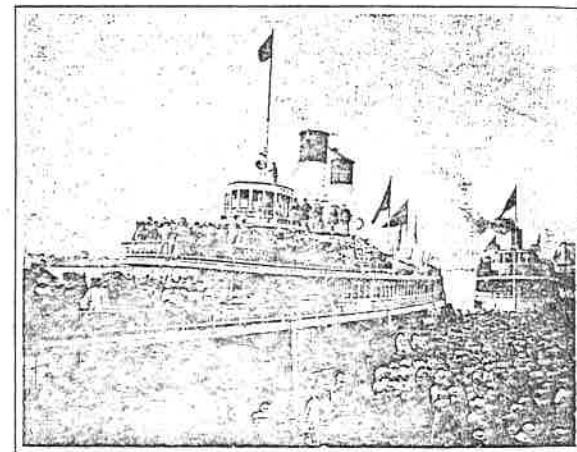
staterooms is equipped with a telephone, and there is a telephone "central," so that passengers may converse with one another or with the ship's officers without leaving their berths. There are reading-rooms, and music-rooms, and writing-rooms, magnificently upholstered and furnished; and on more than one of these Lake palaces passengers may amuse themselves at shuffle-board, quoits, and other games which fifty millions of Americans believe are characteristic only of ocean craft. Another of these "tubs"—the *Eastern States*—broke Lake records last year by berthing and feeding 1500 people on a single trip; and the new *City of Cleveland* will accommodate two thousand without crowding.

Notwithstanding the extreme cheapness of their rates of transportation, Lake passenger vessels constantly vie with one another in maintaining a high standard of appearance and comfort. This is illustrated in the interesting case of the *City of St. Ignace*, which was built a number of years ago at a cost of \$175,000. Since that time, in painting, decorating, refurnishing, etc., and not including the cost of broken machinery or expense of crew, nearly \$300,000 have been spent in the

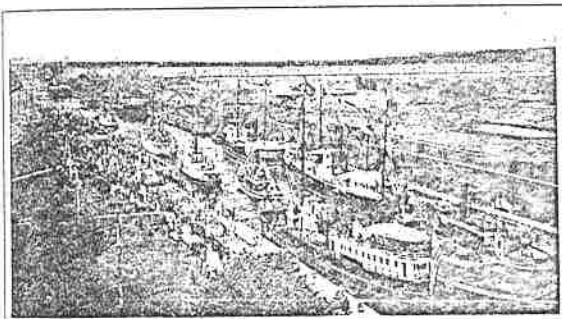
maintenance of this vessel, a sum considerably greater than her original cost. A Government law says that thirty per cent. of the cost of a vessel must be expended in this kind of maintenance before that particular boat can change its name. The *City of St. Ignace* could have changed her name four times! And the case of the *St. Ignace* is only one of many.

I have gone into these facts with some detail for the purpose of showing that the extreme cheapness of travel and life along the Lakes does not signify a loss of either comfort or luxury. In few words, it means that the Lakes, as in all other branches of their industries, are agents of tremendous saving to the nation at large in this one; and that, were the pleasure-seekers and travellers of the country to become better acquainted with them, the annual "dividend" earned in freight transportation would be doubled by passenger traffic. The figures of almost any transportation

line on the Lakes will verify this. Last year, for instance, one carried two hundred thousand passengers between Detroit and Cleveland, a day fare between these points being one dollar, the distance 110 miles, making that four fifths, or one hundred and sixty thousand passengers travelled by day. If the total expense would be \$160,000, to rail the distance is 167 miles, the fare \$3.35, making a total fare of \$530,000. These figures show that one passenger line alone between just two cities, saving travellers of the country \$370,000 last year. The saving between points is in many instances even greater. Once each week one goes by water from Detroit to Buffalo, or from Buffalo to Detroit, a distance of 260 miles, for \$1.25, while the rail rate is seven dollars; and at any time during the week, and on any day, the fare is only \$2.50. These low rates prevail, not only in localities



THE "TASHMOO," WHEN ADMIRAL DEWEY MADE HIS TOUR OF THE GREAT LAKES
The Admiral and Mrs. Dewey stand on the bridge in front of the pilot house



THE LOCKS OF THE SAULT STE. MARIE WHEN ADMIRAL DEWEY PASSED THROUGH

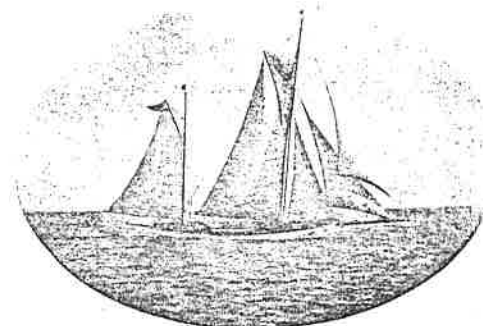
but all over the Lakes. The tourist may board a Mackinaw boat at any time in Cleveland, for instance, travel across Lake Erie, up the Detroit River, through Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron, and back again—a round trip of nearly one thousand miles—at an expense of *ten dollars*. The round trip from Detroit to Mackinaw, which gives the tourist two days and two nights aboard ship and a ride of six hundred miles, costs eight dollars. The rail fare is \$11.66. At a ticket expense of less than twenty-five dollars one may spend a whole week aboard a floating palace of the Lakes and make a tour of the inland seas that will carry him over nearly three thousand miles of waterway, his actual service at the same time being equal to and from a third to a half as expensive as that of a first-class hotel.

Excursion rates, which one may take advantage of during the season, are even less, frequently not more than half as high as given above.

When one becomes acquainted with the facts it is easy for him to understand the truth of Mr. Schantz's statement that "people don't know the Lakes." If they did, the passenger traffic on them would be thirty million instead of

saving of ten million dollars to the people because of Lake passenger ships, the "dividend" that thus goes into their pockets would be twice that amount.

Foreign shipbuilders as well as Americans along the seacoasts frankly concede that vessel-building on the Lakes has developed into a science which is equalled nowhere else in the world, evidence of which I have offered in a former article. This is true of passenger ships as well as of freighters, and the strongest proof of this fact lies in the almost inconceivably small loss of life among travelers on the Lakes. There was a time when the marine tragedies of the inland seas were appalling, and if all the ships lost upon them were evenly distributed there would be a sunken hulk every half-mile over the entire thousand-mile waterway between Buffalo and Duluth. But those days are gone. Lake travel has not only become the cheapest in the world, but the safest as well. The figures which show this are of tremendous interest when compared with other statistics. Of the sixteen million men, women and children who travelled on Lake passenger ships last year, *only three were lost*, or one out of every five million three hundred thousand. Two of these were accident-



YACHTING ON THE GREAT LAKES

ally drowned, and the third met death by fire. The percentage of ocean casualties is twelve times as great, and of the eight hundred million people who travelled on our railroads during 1906 approximately one out of every sixty thousand was killed or injured.

To the great majority of our many millions of people the summer life of the Lakes is as little known as the passenger traffic. And, if possible, it offers even greater inducements, especially to those who wish to enjoy the pleasures of an ideal summer outing and who can afford to spend but a very small sum of money. Notwithstanding this fact, the shores and countless islands of the Great Lakes are taken advantage of even less than their low transportation rates. Only a few of the large and widely advertised resorts receive anything like the patronage of seacoast pleasure grounds. If a person in the East or West, for instance, plans to spend a month somewhere along the Lakes, about the only information that he can easily obtain is on points like Mackinaw Island; popular resorts which are ideal for the tourist who wishes to pass most of his time aboard ship, or who, in stopping off at these more fashionable

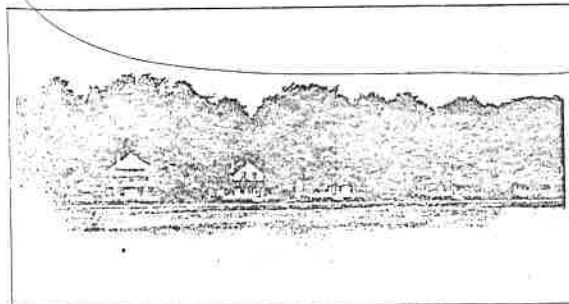
places, is not especially worried about funds.

It is not of such isolated places as the great resorts that I shall speak first. They play their part, and an important one, in the summer life of the Lakes; but it is to another phase of this life, one which is almost entirely unknown, that I wish to call attention. The man who does not have to count the contents of his pocket-book when he leaves home will find his holiday joys without much trouble. But how about the man who works for a small salary, and who with his restricted means wishes to give his wife and children the pleasures of a real vacation? What about the men and women and children who look forward for weeks and months, and who plan and save and economize, sometimes hopelessly, that *somewhere* they may have two weeks together, free from the worry and care and eternal grind of their daily life? It is to such people as these, unnumbered thousands of them, that the Lakes should call—and loudly. And it is to such as these that I wish to describe the astonishing conditions which now exist along thousands of miles of our Great Lakes coast line—conditions which, were they generally known,

would attract many million more people to our inland seas next year than will be found there during the present summer.

"But where shall I go?" asks the man who is planning a vacation, and who may live two or three hundred miles away from the nearest of the Great Lakes. He is perplexed, and with good cause. He has spent other vacations away from home and generally speaking he knows what a hold-up game ordinary summer resort life is. But he need not fear this on the Lakes. All that he has to do in order successfully to solve this problem of "where to go" is to get a map, select any little town or village situated on the fresh-water sea nearest to him, or three or four of them, for that matter, and write to the postmasters. If they do not reply they will in four cases out of five turn the communications over to some person who will interest himself to that extent. Say, for instance, that you write to the little port of Vermillion, on Lake Erie. Your reply will state that "Shattuck's Grove would be a nice place for you to spend your holidays; or you may go to Ruggles' Grove, half a dozen miles up the beach; or you can get cheap accommodations, board and room for three or four dollars a week apiece, at any one of a

hundred farmhouses that look right out over the lake." In fact, it is not necessary for you to write at all. When you are ready to leave on your vacation, when your trunk is ready and the wife and children all aglow with eagerness and expectancy—why, start. Go direct to any one of these little Lake towns. Within a day after arriving there, or within two days at the most, you will be settled. I have passed nearly all of my life along the Lakes, and have travelled over every mile of the Lake Erie shore; I have gone from end to end of them all, and I do not know of a Lake town that does not possess in its immediate vicinity what is locally known as a "grove." A grove, on the Lakes, means a piece of woods that the owner has cleared of underbrush, where the children may buy ice cream and candy, where there are plenty of swings, boats, fishing-tackle, and perhaps a merry-go-round, and where the pleasure-seeker may rent a tent at almost no cost, buy his meals at ridiculously low prices and live entirely on the grounds, or board with some farmer in the neighborhood. A "grove," in other words, is what might be called a rural resort, a place visited almost entirely by country people and the residents of neighboring towns, and where one may fish,



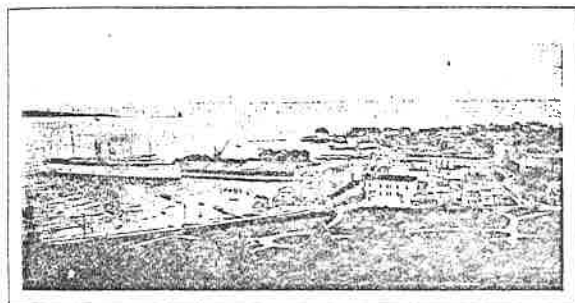
INDEPENDENT COTTAGES ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER

swim, and enjoy the most glorious of all vacations for no more than it would cost him to live at home, and frequently for less.

There are many hundreds of these "groves" along the Lakes, unknown to all but those who live near them. Only on occasion of Sunday-school picnics or Fourth of July celebrations are they crowded. They are the most ideal of all places in which to spend one's holidays, if rest and quiet recreations are what the pleasure-seeker desires. And these groves are easily found. I do not believe there is a twenty-mile stretch along Lake Erie that does not possess its grove, and sometimes there are a dozen of them within that distance. I know of many that are not even situated near villages, being five or six miles away and patronized almost entirely by farmers. In almost any one of them a family may enjoy camp life if they wish, buy their supplies of neighboring farmers, do their own cooking, rent a good boat for from twenty-five to fifty cents a day, and get other things at a corresponding cost. I am personally acquainted with one family of four who came from Louisville to one of these sylvan resorts on Lake Huron last year, and the total expense of their three-weeks vacation, not including railroad fare, was under fifty dollars. The experience of these parents and their children is not an exception. It is a common one with those who are acquainted with the Lakes and who know how to take advantage of them to their own profit.

There is another phase of Lake life, a degree removed from that which I have described, which is also unknown beyond its own local environment and which ought to be made to be of great profit and pleasure to those seeking holiday recreation along our inland seas. The shores of the Lakes, from end to end, are literally dotted with what might appropriately be called lakeside inns—places located far from the dust and noise and more fashionable gaiety of crowded resorts and cities, where one may enjoy all

of the simpler pleasures of water life for from six to eight dollars a week. This price includes room, board, boats, fishing-tackle, and other accommodations. At most of these places the board is similar to that which one secures at the home of a farmer. Fish, frogs' legs and other delicacies are placed upon the table, and the dishes, heaped with fresh vegetables from the kitchen as soon as they become empty. The fish and game are kepters nothing, for they are mostly caught by the pleasure-seekers themselves; frogs usually abound somewhere in the immediate vicinity, and where the landlord does not raise his own fowls they are purchased from neighboring farmers. The inn is a local market for butter, eggs, celery and vegetables of all kinds, so it is not difficult to understand why the board at these places is superior to almost any that can be found in a city. I have no doubt that if these lakeside inns were generally known they would be so crowded that life would not be worth living in them. But they are not known and as a consequence are running along in their old-fashioned way, sources of unrivalled summer joy to those who have been fortunate enough to discover them. At many of these inns only a dollar a day is charged, all accommodations included, and the price is seldom above \$1.50 a day, even for transients. At Pearl Beach, Michigan, I know of one inn that has been "discovered" by half a dozen travelling men and their wives. Three of these families live in Cleveland, one in Pittsburgh and two in New York, and each year they spend a month together on Lake St. Clair. The cost is six dollars a week for each adult! A few weeks ago I was talking with one of these men, the representative of a New York dry-goods firm, and he told me that, for himself, his wife and two children it cost less to stay a month at this place than it did to pass a single week at an ocean resort, and that the accommodations and opportunities for pleasure were



STEAMSHIP "NORTHWEST" MAKING A LANDING AT MACKINAC, MICHIGAN

greater there than he had ever been able to afford on the Atlantic. I do not wish to emphasize the attractions of any particular inn, for in most ways all of them are alike. And the holiday-seeker who knows nothing of the Lakes can find them as easily as he can locate the groves I have described. The secret of the whole thing is in the knowledge that hundreds of such places really exist.

I have often thought that if it were possible for every person in the United States to make a trip over the Lakes, and to spend at Niagara Falls, our inland resort, that day on would be recognized as the greatest pleasure-grounds of the world. At Niagara Falls, the

tourist takes the Gorge ride, and makes a trip on the *Maid of the Mist*. But he is probably unfamiliar with the immediate neighborhood. There are a score of spots hallowed by history, and whose incidents have become some of the most romantic pages in the story of our country.

He may not know that within a few miles of the falls was the battle of Queenston Heights, and that certain points the earthworks of the British still remain, that he stands in the very spot where Brock fell dying, and that he can step by step, that thrilling climb up on the summit of the cliffs. Neither does the

ordinary tourist know that almost within sight of the falls is one of the oldest cemeteries in America, where many of the men who were slain in the battles of those regions are at rest. Old Fort Niagara remains almost unvisited, and the spot not far distant where the adventurer La Salle built the *Griffin*, the first vessel ever to sail the Lakes, is virtually unknown. Two weeks, and every hour of them filled with interest, might be spent by the Lake tourist at Niagara Falls, yet the average person is satisfied with a day. And it is all because he does not know. This may be said of his experiences from end to end of the Lakes.

When his ship passes into Lake Erie he enters upon new and even more thrilling pages of history. Near Put-in-Bay his captain can point out to him where Perry and his nine log ships of war engaged and whipped the British fleet in 1813; for nearly a hundred miles his vessel will travel over the very course taken by the fleeing British ships, and that course, if he follows it to the Thames, will lead to the scenes of the fierce battle that was fought there, and of the sanguinary conflict with the Indians in which the famous chieftain Tecumseh was slain. And all this time he will see rising along the white stretches of shore the smoke of great cities, and

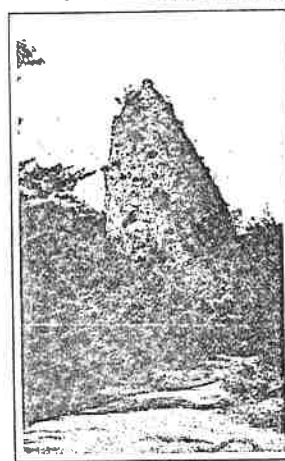
hundreds of miles of wooded beach, where unnumbered millions might pass their summer holidays without crowding. And when he enters the Detroit River he looks out upon quiet Canadian shores and little "Sleepy Hollow" towns, still characterized by the quaint French atmosphere and peacefulness that marked them a century ago.

Now he begins to see the crowded, noisy, jostling pleasures of popular river resorts; then comes Detroit, the greatest excursion city on the Lakes. Here again history may add to the pleasure of his reflections, for three nations have fought for and possessed Detroit. He passes Belle Isle, the greatest pleasure ground in the world with the exception of

Coney Island, and a few minutes later can almost throw a stone upon the island that was once the home of the famous Indian chief Pontiac, and where the plans for that bloodthirsty warrior's assaults upon the whites were made. Then follows the course across beautiful Lake St. Clair, and the slow journey through Little Venice, where again the crowds and music and gay vessels of one of the most popular resorts in America greet his eyes for many miles; where every bit of land that thrusts itself out of the lake is lined with summer cottages and lakeside inns. Here the tourist may stop for a dollar a day, or two dollars a day, and may mingle freely with bankers and merchants and

millionaires as well as with the "common herd." It is a mixed, happy, cosmopolitan life.

From Little Venice the tourist's ship enters the St. Clair River, among which live innumerable captains of ships. It is a paradise of beauty, along which one may buy the best sites cheaply, for one can get a more ordinary view of the river. Here the traveller will see the tents of happy campers from the city, comfortable inns, and near and then a summer resort hotel—a mixed life, one of pleasure for the man with a family and little money as well as for him who has more than he knows well how to spend.



SUGARLOAF, ONE OF THE MANY NATURAL ROCK FORMATIONS OF MACKINAC ISLAND

Once out upon the bosom of Lake Huron, the scenes begin to change. Now there are miles of shore on which there is hardly a habitation to be seen. From Saginaw Bay northward for hundreds of miles along the Georgian Bay and Michigan shores, the grandeur and beauty of the wilderness are seen from the deck of the vessel. As one progresses farther North the scenes become wilder and wilder, until the captain may tell you that you are looking out over regions where the bear and the deer and the wolf make their homes; and if you have a drop of sportsman's blood in you, he adds to your excitement by saying that you may see big game from the deck of the ship before the trip is over. At times, and for long distances, the vessel seems to be picking her way between innumerable islands, and if the course is

Picking their way