

The Beaver Beacon



Only Island Publication since King Strang's "Northern Islander" in 1856 - Established January 1955

1955

TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

1965

January 1965

The Beaver Islander made her last trip of 1964 on December 27th, after discharging her final cargo of supplies for the winter. Cold and windy weather doesn't stop the crowds from forming when the boat comes in, for it is always interesting to see just what will be unloaded. Building supplies, groceries, furniture and a wide assortment of other merchandise. Vernon "Dick" LaFreniere took delivery of an assortment of groceries, a new sno-mobile and a casket. We don't know whether the last two items go together or not, at least we hope not.

BEAVER BEACON MARKS TENTH YEAR: In January of 1955, the first Beacon was mailed out in the hopes that it would be met with approval. It was received with enthusiasm and we hope each issue always will. Those who helped put the first issues together were Jewell Gillespie, Father Joseph Herp, Rogers Carlisle, Lloyd McDonough, Loy Malloy, Dr. Harry Vail and Art Johnston. Other persons who helped make up the first issue were Mrs. Harry Vail, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon LaFreniere, Mrs. Walter Wojan, Mrs. Art Johnston and Susan Johnston. We might add that Loy Malloy is still on the Beacon staff and has worked on each issue, these past ten years.

JANUARY 1955 NOTES: On Monday January 17, 1955 construction was started on the new ferry, Emerald Isle.

538 issues of the first Beaver Beacon were mailed out and by the end of January there were 153 members - 136 personal memberships and 17 business memberships.

1964 WRUNG OUT: With parties at the "Shamrock" and the "Circle M", the old year was bade farewell and the new year was welcomed in with horn blowing, balloons, bell ringing and dancing. New Year's Day was quiet on the Island and harsh noises were avoided like the plague. Woe to those that took their noisemakers home to the kiddies. Joining us to greet the New Year were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph LaFreniere, Mr. and Mrs. David Pike with Elaine and Francis, Ricky Elms, Mr. and Mrs. John Adams, Perry Crawford and Mike, who also brought a friend, Harold Ricksgers and son, Marilyn and Clifford Napont and Mr. and Mrs. Walker Hill, who recently returned to the U. S. after two years in India.

WEATHER: this weather report was compiled by Bill Wagner, our Fire Officer.

The weather for the most part of December was warm and sunny. On Dec. 1st we had 10 inches of snow on the ground. Due to rain and warm temperatures most of the snow was gone by the 11th. This was short lived however, for on the 14th the ground, again, was covered with snow. 24 inches of snow was recorded for the month.

On the 24th there was heavy fog.

Highest temperature for the month was 41 degrees on the 11th, with the lowest temperature, of 4 degrees, falling on the night of the 18th. The average daytime temperature was 29.5 degrees - slightly below freezing.

Nights were reasonably warm with an average temperature of 18 degrees. There were 2 days with the temperatures in the 40's, 15 days in the 30's, 11 days in the 20's and three days the temperatures fell below the 20 degree mark. No sub-zero temperatures were recorded.

GAME NEWS: This is the time of year for rabbit hunting and it looks as though it is another good one. One group of nine hunters shot 76 rabbits in two days. Milt Bennett and his beagles have been hard at it and their score is growing with each day's hunt. Archie LaFreniere is intending to start making the Island's coyote population decrease with an organized hunt this week.

At the present time we have hunters from Detroit, Boyne Falls and Harbor Springs. Edwin McCann is here with a few friends and Dick LaFreniere reports that the plane ride over was a little bumpy for Edwin, because for some reason he found the safety belt was a little short. We want to wish him the best of luck on his rabbit hunt while he is here. The ice on Lake Geneserath is being peppered full of holes as Don Cole and Perry Gatliff have been going for the blue gills. All reports indicate that the fishing is good.

WINTER'S AWAY: Our numbers are getting smaller with more of our Islanders leaving for the winter. In fact, at the last census our count was 170. The following have left until spring. Mrs. Elizabeth Gallagher, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Gallagher and their three sons, Mr. and Mrs. Bert McDonough, Leon LaFreniere, Mrs. Mary Green, Ben O'Donnell, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Near, Mrs. Mary "Vesty" McDonough, Mr. and Mrs. Frank O'Donnell, Mrs. Mary Early, Edna McCann, Bill Belfy, Mr. and Mrs. Art Brown and Stanley Floyd.

YOUTH CENTER JUMPS: As winter closes in on the Island the youngsters are finding more to do this year. Along with skating on the harbor the Center provides activities to fill out the week-ends. A project now underway is the construction of a 13½ foot sail boat. Upon completion the boat will belong to the Center to be used to teach sailing in the summer.

Our annual Christmas Caroling trip was postponed because of bad weather but the carolers, along with Sister Europhine and Sister Karen, had a Christmas Party at the Hall and were served hot chocolate and cookies.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS: Colleen Nackerman, of Mary Grove College, spent Christmas with her parents, Mrs. and Mrs. Frank Nackerman. Also, with them this Christmas, was another daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Dick (Ellen) Verduyn and family.

Edward and Evelyn Palmer returned to spend Christmas with their parents Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Palmer. Late arrivals were Robert and Perry Palmer.

Mr. and Mrs. Al (Margaret) Bolton and Nancy Kenwabakisse visited their parents for Christmas, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kenwabakisse.

Joe Evans returned from Western Michigan to spend the Holiday's with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Evans.

Loretta and Alvin LaFreniere spent Christmas with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Archie LaFreniere. Loretta returned to her home in Lansing and Alvin returned to his appointment with Uncle Sam.

Bruce McDonough and sons, Ronnie and Shawn, spent part of the Holiday with his father, Mr. Lloyd McDonough.

WEDDINGS: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kenwabakisse announce the marriage of their daughter, Margaret, to Mr. Al Bolton of Traverse City. The marriage took place on December 19th in Traverse City. Our congratulations to the happy couple.

SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN: The following address has been received by the Beacon Editors:

Pvt. Alvin H. LaFreniere US 55802449
COF 10th BN. 3d. TNG Bde 1st PLt.
USATC ARMOR
Fort Knox, Kentucky 40121

OFF FOR THE HOLIDAY'S: The following Islander's spent the Holiday's away but have since returned home. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Sendenburgh, Karl Keubler, Dick LaFreniere, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Bonner, Mrs. Hattie Nanigaw, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Martin and Pam, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Wagner with Dennis and Jody.

OBITUARIES: Mrs. William Parker of Pontiac passed away on December 20th. She was the former Mary Schmidt and her sister, Mrs. James (Elsie) O'Donnel and brother, Mr. William Schmidt attended her funeral in Pontiac.

Mr. William Gibson, 83, passed away on December 17th at his home in Charlevoix. Mr. Gibson was born on Beaver Island on December 5, 1881. He married the former Belle O'Brian, and they have resided in Charlevoix the past 39 years.

MUSEUM NOTES: The beaver Island Historical Society would like to repeat that the book "The Child of the Sea" is available in the soft cover for only \$1.95 and in the hard cover for \$2.95. Also available is a few copies of the "Crown of Glory" by Reigal and there are two copies of the "Kingdom of St. James" by Milo Quailf for sale. Please write the Beaver Island Historical Society, St. James, Michigan. Attention: Lin Rountree.

BIRTHS: A new Beaver Islander arrived on January 11th at 4:00 P.M. in the Beaver Island Medical Center. The William (Gloria) Ross's proudly announce the arrival of Kelly Annette Ross, weighing in at 8 lb. 1 oz. We want to congratulate the proud parents.

LIGHTS OUT: The point is very dark now as our Beaver Island Light has been turned off until spring, when the Coast Guard will again return to Beaver Island. We all miss the friendly red light across the harbor.

BEAVER TALES

48 YEARS AGO TRAGEDY STRUCK SQUAW ISLAND
LIGHT CREW; LONE SURVIVOR TELLS STORY

From the Charlevoix Courier, Charlevoix, Michigan on Wednesday,
December 15, 1948

With the closing of Great Lakes navigation in December and the return of lighthouse crews to the mainland aboard such ships as the Coast Guard cutters Woodbine and Sundew, old timers reminisce about the olden days and the narrow escapes many of the early light-keepers experienced. One of the stories most often related is of the Squaw Island light tragedy when three persons died in the icy waters of Lake Michigan and two others barely escaped with their lives.

Capt. Owen J. McCauley, now 79, who retired in 1936 after 38 years in the lighthouse service, tells the story of the tragedy which took place on Dec. 14 and 15, 1900 and of which he is now the only living survivor. The Squaw Island light, on the northernmost island in the Beaver group was closed the morning of Dec. 14. At 12:30 the keeper, William H. Shields, his wife, her niece, Mrs. Lucy Davis, of Richmond, Ind., first assistant keeper, McCauley and second assistant keeper, Lucien Morden of Montague, along with Shields' shepherd dog, Fids, launched the 22 foot sailboat which was to take them nine miles to the south to Beaver Island on the first lap of their journey home for the winter months. The day was cold and dense vapor hung over the water making visibility poor. A moderate wind was blowing from the northeast which gave the craft a beam wind and from the speed the party estimated they would be at St. James harbor in two hours.

In less than ten minutes, however, the boat was becalmed for a short time before another breeze blew up from the east forcing them to haul the sails in close to hold their course. Just as quickly the wind died down and the boat was again rocking in the swells.

In gazing about, McCauley recalls, he noticed a puff of wind coming from the north with great force and cautioned Shields, who was at the helm, and Morden, who was where he could handle the fore sheet, to be on the look-out. Instantly the squall hit the canvas and as the boat had no headway it was laid over by the force of the wind. By the time Morden slacked off the sails it was too late. The boat was overbalanced and slowly laid over until the sails were flat on the water.

The women screamed and were helpless. When McCauley saw the boat tipping he jumped on the side of it to avoid going in the water but when the others went in the icy water he went to their aid. They pulled Mrs. Shields up on the upturned boat and tied her to the center board. Morden tied Mrs. Davis with the fore sheet and when McCauley saw that that would not hold he went down in the water and cut apart one of the sail halyards. After that the articles were thrown and shoved from the capsized boat to give it bouyancy.

Shortly after the accident they sighted a fish tug coming around the northeast point of Beaver Island but they were too far away to be seen by the fishermen although the squall had cleared the air. They had hopes however, that they would drift into the path of the tugs as the latter returned from the fishing grounds in the evening.

About this time the dog, Fids, became exhausted and sank, the first victim.

As darkness hovered over them they saw the lights of the returning tugs but they were too far away to make themselves heard by the men aboard the boats chugging along to their home ports.

Mrs. Davis, realizing all was hopeless, wept bitterly and then seemed to sleep. She died about 6:30 p.m.

Mrs. Shields kept asking for her niece and was told she was sleeping. She later became delirious and died about 8 p.m. McCauley, in relating the story said, "It is beyond my ability to describe the horrible agonies suffered by the women before they died."

Jordan then remarked that he would be the next victim. "I tried to encourage him," McCauley related, "and told him that we were drifting toward High Island where the Indians would help us. But his hands were even then numb and puffed by the cold. He was sitting erect, holding the jib sheet when suddenly he shuddered, losing his grip on the rope and slid into the water. I caught his arm and tried to help him but he pulled away. I heard splashing for a few seconds and then he sank.

As dawn appeared and objects became visible McCauley and Shields found their boat still far from land.

The Beaver Island fish tugs again appeared but as they passed the northwest point of the island and at the closest point were three miles from the overturned boat.

As they continued to drift the two survivors knew they would miss Trout Island also, so their only hope was to drift into the steamer channel. Cold and hunger were already preying on them and a southeast wind which had started at sunrise had brought occasional snow squalls making conditions even worse.

The body of Mrs. Shields lay in the water under the gaze of her distracted husband. Shields moved about on the boat and retied himself and McCauley did the same, allowing a little slack so he could move about in an effort to keep from freezing.

About the middle of the morning McCauley saw smoke to the east and after another snow squall a steamship was in sight. Shield could not even look up but McCauley managed to stand up and wave.

He was sighted and the steamer swung towards them, lowered a small boat and they were carefully taken aboard.

The ship was the Manattan of the Gilchrist Steamship Co. bound for Manitowoc with a cargo of coal. After the ice covered bodies of the two women were removed the ship continued to Manitowoc.

The next morning at Manitowoc the two men were taken to the Holy Family Hospital. Shield's hands and feet were badly frozen, but McCauley was in better condition. He was dismissed from the hospital and arrived home at Beaver Island Dec. 26. Shields remained at the hospital for six months and one of his legs had to be taken off at the knee.

Following his dismissal from the hospital, Shields was appointed keeper at the newly constructed lighthouse depot at Charlevoix, where he served until his retirement in April, 1924. He died in September, 1925.

Capt. McCauley, a native of Beaver Island, who had joined the lighthouse service in 1898, was promoted to principal keeper of the Squaw Island light after the tragedy and remained in command until the light was closed in 1928. He was then transferred to the St. Joseph, Mich., light where he was stationed until he retired in 1936. He now makes his home at St. Joseph, returning to Beaver Island each summer for a visit.

ANNUAL CIVIC MEETING: The Annual Civic Association meeting was held on January 7th and the following people were elected to the Board of Directors. Jack Martin, Rogers Carlisle, L. Z. Reigle and Lillian Gregg. The following people have one more year to serve: Bud McDonough, Mary Minor, Erwin Martin, Joy Green and Dr. Haynes. The new officers are: Jack Martin, President; Rogers Carlisle, Vice-President; Lil Gregg, Secretary and Mary Minor, Treasurer. Committee Chairmen are: Beacon - Loy Malloy; Activities - Eileen Martin and Marge Wagner; Game Club - Erwin Martin and Commerce - Archie LaFreniere.

