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Archives Center - NMAH

Forman H. Craton - 1941 - Diary

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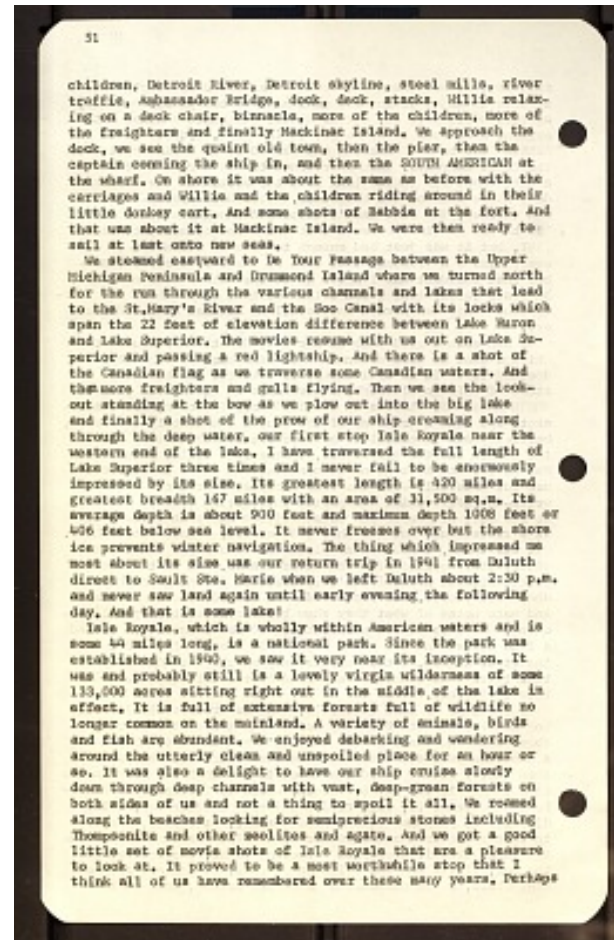
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children, Detroit River, Detroit skyline, steel mills, river traffic, Ambassador Bridge, dock, deck, stacks, Willie relaxing on a deck chair, binnacle, more of the children, more of the freighters and finally Mackinac Island. We approach the dock, we see the quaint old town, then the pier, then the captain conning the ship in, and then the SOUTH AMERICAN at the wharf. On shore it was about the same as before with the carriages and Willie and the children riding around in their little donkey cart. And some shots of Babbie at the fort. And that was about it at Mackinac Island. We were then ready to sail at last onto new seas.

We steamed eastward to De Tour Passage between the Upper Michigan Peninsula and Drummond Island where we turned north for the run through the various channels and lakes that lead to the St. Mary's River and the Soo Canal with its locks which span the 22 feet of elevation difference between Lake Huron and Lake Superior. The movies resume with us out on Lake Superior and passing a red lightship. And there is a shot of the Canadian flag as we traverse some Canadian waters. And then more freighters and gulls flying. Then we see the lookout standing at the bow as we plow out into the big lake and finally a shot of the prow of our ship creaming along through the deep water, our first stop Isle Royale near the western end of the lake. I have traversed the full length of Lake Superior three times and I never fail to be enormously impressed by its size. Its greatest length is 420 miles and greatest breadth 167 miles with an area of 31,500 sq.m. Its average depth is about 900 feet and maximum depth 1008 feet or 406 feet below sea level. It never freezes over but the shore ice prevents winter navigation. The thing which impressed me most about its size was our return trip in 1941 from Duluth direct to Sault Ste. Marie when we left Duluth about 2:30 p.m. and never saw land again until early evening the following day. And that is some lake!

Isle Royale, which is wholly within American waters and is some 44 miles long, is a national park. Since the park was established in 1940, we saw it very near its inception. It was and probably still is a lovely virgin wilderness of some 133,000 acres sitting right out in the middle of the lake in effect. It is full of extensive forests full of wildlife no longer common on the mainland. A variety of animals, birds and fish are abundant. We enjoyed debarking and wandering around the utterly clean and unspoiled place for an hour or so. It was also a delight to have our ship cruise slowly down through deep channels with vast, deep-green forests on both sides of us and not a thing to spoil it all. We roamed along the beaches looking for semiprecious stones including Thompsonite and other zeolites and agate. And we got a good little set of movie shots of Isle Royale that are a pleasure to look at. It proved to be a most worthwhile stop that I think all of us have remembered over these many years. Perhaps



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