

By HERBERT J. SELIGMANN



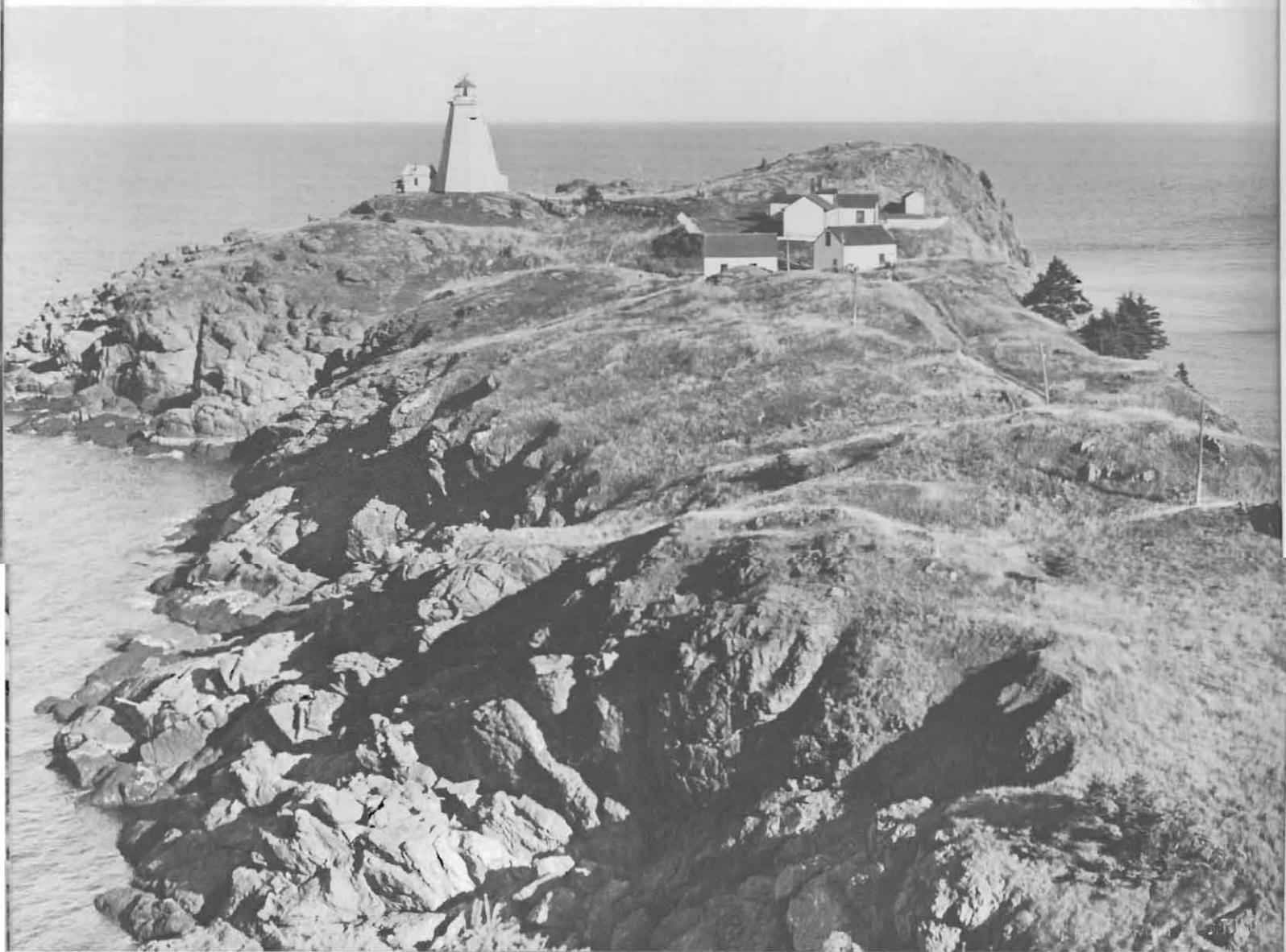
THE GRAND MANAN MOOD

GRAND MANAN is at once a mood and a geographical fact. The mood is akin to the feeling people used to have on a transatlantic liner before the days of radio: of detachment and isolation from the world, of consequent peace and serenity. There is a feeling, too, of space, induced by the great ocean moving irresistibly in and out with the Bay of Fundy tides.

The geographical facts are at first glance simple. Shaped roughly like a triangle, Grand Manan is an island 15 miles long (21 by road), that lies six miles off the easternmost point of Maine; it is about eight miles from the Canadian island of Campobello and 25 miles from the New Brunswick mainland. Viewed from the Quoddy Head lighthouse on the American side, the island looks like a long, brooding, formidable fortress-wall, and, in fact, that side of the island is almost uninhabited.

On its eastern side the island slopes and rolls toward the water where coves, beaches, headlands and off-shore islands create a varied and handsome landscape. Though from a distance Grand Manan looks like an isolated unit, it is actually part of an archipelago of about 20 lesser islands, the largest of them, Whitehead

Swallow Tail Light



Island, having a population of some 700, the smallest being rocks frequented only by sea birds.

As a center for commercial fishing Grand Manan was long famous. At one time it was the greatest producer of smoked herring on the Atlantic seaboard. Its lobsters are famous, and its eight large lobster pounds, stockaded at just the level to contain their cargo in the 20-24-foot tides, can hold a million pounds at one time. Cod, pollack, haddock and other fish are also abundant.

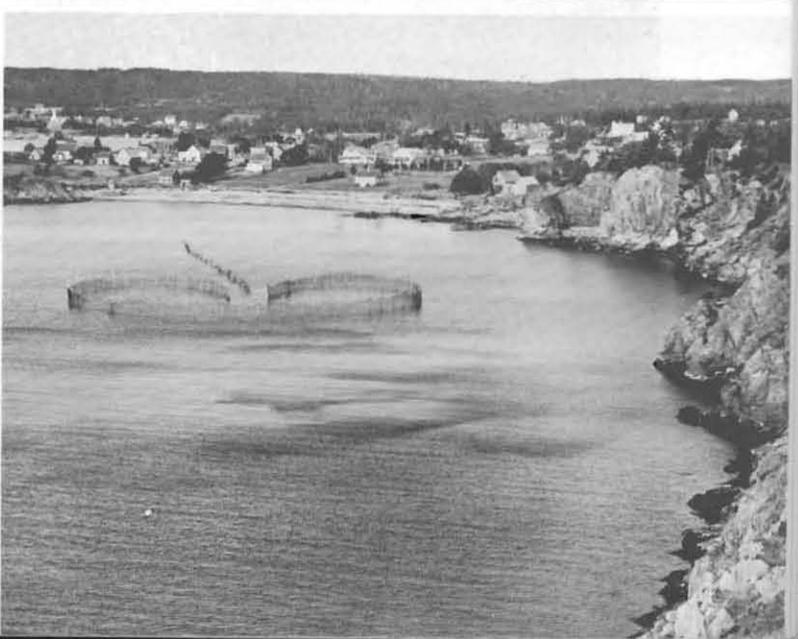
There is more than a slight connection between Grand Manan and Americans. After the removed early visits of the Norsemen and the occupation alternately by the French and English, the island was settled mainly by Loyalists escaping to Canada in 1784 after the War of the Revolution. They were followed by other emigrants from the United States and by later arrivals from England, Scotland and Nova Scotia. Since that time it has been much visited by Americans, one of whom, the novelist, Willa Cather, first came to the island in 1922 and later with a friend built a house in Whale Cove at the northern tip of the island, making that her refuge until 1942.

Unless you have your own boat or yacht—and in the tremendous tides, sudden fogs and storms of the Bay of Fundy you need to be a good sailor to venture there—you may approach Grand Manan from several directions but you have only one means of reaching the island itself. This is on the *Grand Manan III*, a ferry which plies between St. Andrews, New Brunswick and Grand Manan, stopping only at Wilsons Beach on Campobello Island. The present ferry, originally built as a yacht, with an overall length of 183 feet and a smart speed of 15 knots, leaves much to be desired by residents and visitors alike. Although it is an excellent sea boat, it is not adequate for its present service, being able to accommodate only eight cars which must be hoisted on and off. (No cars are taken aboard at Campobello.) In the summer season, anyone wishing to take a car to or from the island must make reservations weeks in advance. Once on the island the visitor must stay until the next scheduled trip. The ferry leaves St. Andrews at 1:30 p.m. on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and makes the return trip from Grand Manan at 8 a.m. on its scheduled runs. The fare each way for cars is \$5; for passengers, \$2.45. Cars, with or without driver, can be rented at reasonable rates on the island.

As the ferry approaches Grand Manan, the visitor sees the dark basalt cliffs and headlands loom from the water, surf beating at their bases. Passing Swallowtail, with its lighthouse perched on rocks that jut steeply from the sea, the ferry rounds to a pier, disclosing vistas of white houses on the gently sloping hills.

Now the mood of Grand Manan begins. Stepping ashore you become an islander, cut off from the mainland and its cares. Along the shore at various points are small inns—without luxury, but clean—where good

The ferry,
Grand Manan III





food is served. Here again, in the height of the summer season, July and August, it is necessary to have reservations.

The chief towns, traveling south from Northern Head, are Castalia, Woodward's Cove, Grand Harbor and Seal Cove, all joined by a smooth, hard-surfaced road which ends just before Deep Cove and continues as a good dirt road to the island's southern terminus at South West Head. Here another lighthouse stands on cliffs jaggedly dropping 200 feet to murderous looking rocks ringed with boiling surf. All along the western side of the island are ominous black cliffs which extend to the northern tip. Only one great cleft, at Dark Harbor, breaks this western wall. (Dark Harbor can be reached by a steep road, not recommended for nervous drivers, parts of it chipped and cut from the rock wall.) A valley shadowed by a 400-foot mountain on one side and cliffs on the other descends

to a tidal pool formed by a semi-circular seawall of rocks about half a mile long, thrown up by the seas. On the shores of the enclosed pool and on the seawall itself are forlorn little wooden shacks in which, during the summer, live the gatherers of dulse, an edible, iodine-rich seaweed that is used as a condiment and for medicinal purposes. The annual dulse crop harvested each summer comes to 80,000 to 100,000 pounds and brings in from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

But it is on the eastern, variegated shore with its neat white houses, its lobster pounds and fishing harbors that the life of the island with its 2700 inhabitants is centered. In a charming essay, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," written by Keith Ingersoll, the island's historian, the luxury of Christmas in the great cities is contrasted with the isolation of Grand Manau whose ferry never runs on that holiday. "But, far from being a dividing influence, this isolation unites the com-

munity. The feeling of brotherhood and community is enhanced in a seemingly insecure world. The miracle of Christmas is believable, and 'peace on earth' a living reality." The very hazards of the fishermen's lives operate as a leveling and unifying force.

This sense of community and its history are emphasized in the museum maintained in the basement of the Grand Manan High School. Here are reminders of the dangers of the surrounding sea: among them the brass step plates from the steam tug *Gypsum King* lost on St. Mary's Ledge in January, 1906, and the deadeye thought to be from the Norwegian bark *Ashmore* wrecked on the Dixon rocks in 1918. Dominating the little museum is a collection of birds beautifully mounted and donated by three generations of the Moses family. Among the rarities are the now extinct Passenger Pigeon, the Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Little Blue Heron, Upland Plover, and the European Widgeon.

Visitors to Grand Manan often wonder about the contrast of the grim cliffs on the western side of the island with the pleasant diversities of the eastern shore and its outlying islands. The first report on the island's geology was published by Abraham Gesner, M.D., New Brunswick's Provincial Geologist from 1838 to 1843. In the main, that early report still stands. The western part with its massive cliffs, he found, belonged to the Triassic Age and was perhaps 160 to 185 million

years old; the eastern to the Paleozoic and Pre-Cambrian, perhaps 360 to 1500 million years old. The western part represented the only extensive sample of trap (volcanic) rock in New Brunswick, similar to the Palisades of the Hudson River in New York. The junction of the two geologic systems, with the later volcanic effusion overlaying the earlier, is to be seen on the shore just north of Seal Cove.

Oddly enough, the island has no skunks or snakes. There are plenty of deer and other small game for hunters; ponds and streams are stocked with trout by the government and there is fine deep sea fishing with light rods and lines for those who like to try their skill with pollack. Boats can be hired to take visitors on picnics and trips to surrounding islands, including Kent, a bird sanctuary supervised by Bowdoin College, where American Eiders and Leach's Petrel breed.

Grand Manan with its snapping displays of northern lights, its harbors with white boats lined up "like ducklings in a pond," the dramatic vistas down the forbidding cliffs and across to the American and Canadian mainlands offers stimulating days to visitors.

Always there is that serene, self-contained quality of island life; the days, slow-paced, seem harmonized with the rhythm of the tides, and are alternately fog-shrouded and brilliant with drenching sunlight. It is, above all, the mood of Grand Manan that dominates and remains with those who have been there.

