



## Learning on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

*One of America's Byways*

### **Cultural Lesson #8**

**Subject: Tourism**

**Grade Level: 4 – 6**

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#### **Anticipatory Set:**

What are some of the tourist attractions in our area?

#### **New York State Standards:**

**Social Studies:** Standard 1.1, 1.2 - History of the United States and New York

**Language Arts:** Standards 1,2,3,4

**The Arts:** Standard #1 – Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Standard #2 – Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

#### **Objective:**

Students will learn the history and the importance of tourism in their area's economy. Students will create a brochure about local tourist attractions.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this lesson is to have students understand how the tourist industry impacts their local area's economy.

#### **Summary: The Thousand Islands**

The history of recreation in the Thousand Islands is about a place in North America that has been able to keep its beauty of the islands and the waterways over the years. The islands share the boundary between the United States and Canada. Both sides of the border have had their share of tourism throughout the islands. Great hotels and castles can be found on several of the islands. The Thousand Islands offer fishing, boating and relaxation to those seeking them. Recreation in the islands can be divided into three categories:

1. Resort and tourist industry
2. Fishing and water sports
3. Island ownership

History shows that a few Indian villages were established on the islands. There have been artifacts found on the islands that show the Iroquois and Algonquin traveled here to fish and hunt during the summers. The islands were part of the St. Lawrence River traveled by explorers and missionaries. Canoes, bateaus and the Durham boats were means of travel. Later, the steamboat was able to carry a large number of passengers and cargo along the St. Lawrence River. The towns along the shore began to grow and some became docking areas for passengers and supplies. Brockville, Gananoque, Kingston, Alexandria Bay, Clayton, Cape Vincent and Prescott became areas for docking facilities.

Charles Dickens traveled the islands in 1842 from Kingston to Montreal. He described the Thousand Islands and the St. Lawrence River as:



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“ The beauty of this noble stream at almost any point but especially in the commencement of this journey, where it winds its way among the thousand islands, can hardly be imagined. The number and constant successions of these islands, all green and richly wooded; their fluctuating sizes, some so large that for half an hour together one among them will appear as the opposite bank of the river, and some so small, that they are mere dimples on its broad bosom; their infinite variety of shape; and the numberless combinations of beautiful forms which the trees growing on them present: all forms a picture fraught with uncommon interest and pleasure” (Dickens, 1910)

### **Land:**

A wealthy fur trader from New York City, Alexander Macomb, was interested in the islands. When New York State placed land that was acquired from the Indians up for sale Macomb purchased all the American islands and all but two square miles in each township. James Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont came from France and purchased a large land tract, which covered most of Jefferson County, from Macomb. Le Ray provided many of the names of the small towns, rivers and lakes in the county based on honoring members of his family. Azariah Walton and Andrew Cornwall bought some of the islands that included the northwest half of Wellesley Island and all the islands in the American waters of the St. Lawrence River from the foot of Round Island to Morristown. During this time the Thousand Islands was being recognized for their recreational appeal. In 1854, Seth Green, soon to become the Fish Commissioner of New York State, purchased Manhattan Island so he could study the habits of the St. Lawrence River fish.

After the Civil War transportation improved and sportsmen began to travel to Alexandria Bay to fish. People started to enjoy traveling along the river taking in the beauty of the islands, and the excitement of the rapids started to give the region some recognition for its beauty. Many wealthy sportsmen were looking to purchase some of the islands. Cornwall and Walton sold the islands with the stipulation that every second island would remain vacant and those purchased were to have a cottage erected within three years of purchase. George M. Pullman, creator of the sleeping car, had invited General Grant, who was running for president at the time, to come to his island home. News traveled about Grant's visit to the islands and caused an influx of tourist to the area. The need for hotels was addressed.

### **Hotels and Camps:**

Large hotels were built in the mainland communities as well as on some of the islands. Period brochures encouraged families to spend a season on the islands. The hotels hired boatmen to take the tourist fishing. Charles and Ester Crossman first built the Crossman House in Alexandria Bay as a fishermen's tavern in 1848. O.G. Staples built the Thousand Island House in Alexandria Bay in 1872, after President Grant's visit. Men from Central and Northern New York that were connected with the Baptist Church developed the Frontenac Hotel on Round Island. Many hotels offered boating, fishing, tennis, bowling, billiards and ping-pong.

Camps were first established in the 1870's; religious groups or organizations began most of the campgrounds. The Methodist Church founded the Thousand Island



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Park on the upper end of Wellesley Island in 1875. Westminster Park was a Presbyterian Camp on Wellesley Island. The International Camp Ground was a Methodist Camp for members from both Canada and the United States.

Railroads were built to bring people to places like Clayton and Cape Vincent. There were no trains leading into Alexandria Bay; some believed the community wanted to keep the town from being over-run by tourists. Others say Cornwall Brothers Store had a monopoly with the steamship companies and did not want the railroad cutting into their business.

### **Fishing:**

Viewing the islands, bays and the narrow channels became a tourist attraction. Fishermen came from all over with their families to enjoy the fishing the area had to offer. Alexandria Bay was a fishing center and Clayton was more a commercial town with shipbuilding and lumber rafting companies. In 1884 the "Anglers' Association" was formed. Up to this point there were no restrictions on how many fish one could catch. A few years later a law was passed prohibiting taking fish with nets and there was a limit set on how many fish a person could catch per day using a rod. Muskellunge is one of the most popular sport fish, then and still is, on the waters of the St. Lawrence River. The St. Lawrence Skiff, developed by Xavier Colon of Clayton in 1860 was a boat built to handle the weather conditions with speed and ability to be rowed in the best fishing areas along the river.

### **Homes and Castles:**

As years passed, both American and Canadian investors purchased the islands and houses, cottages and even castles were being built on the islands. The houses built on the islands became tourist attraction themselves. Dr. J.G. Holland, editor of Scribner's magazine built Bonnie Castle. Abraham and Nathan Straus built two mansions on Cherry Island. Commodore Fredrick Bourne, head of Singer Sewing Machine Company built a summer retreat known as Jordstat Castle on Dark Island. Charles G. Emery, American Tobacco Co., built a summer home, Calumet Castle in 1893-94 on Calumet Island. George Boldt's castle is one of the most famous castles on the islands; it was constructed for his wife on Heart Island.

There were many beautiful homes built along the shoreline and on the islands. Building supplies were transported over the ice in the winter by horse and carts and on flat barges in the summer. Many of the homes needed a staff to run the homes. The homes also had stonewalls built and gardens made with trees and shrubs designed to complete the look. Businesses along the shoreline benefited during the summer months.

### **Sports:**

Sports were one of the main attractions to the Thousand Islands. Hunting and fishing were one of the first sports found in the area. Canoeing and rowing were other sports people enjoyed on the water. Polo matches, sailing and motor boat races were popular at one time. A lot of the sport events happened at the yacht clubs.



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### **Art:**

Many paintings and photographs of the region have been created over the years. Books have been written about the area and its history. Picture post cards capture the beauty of the area. William Notman of Montreal, A.C. McIntyre of Alexandria Bay and Alex Murray of Brockville are some of the local photographers in the area. Souvenirs could be found in most of the small towns in the area. Mr. Keech of Clayton was known for his hand-painted paddles. Local Indians would travel from island to island selling their basket wares and beadwork.

Today many people come from all over the world to experience the Thousand Islands. The construction of the Thousand Island Bridge in 1938 made travel easier. Today electricity, telephone and other amenities have made the islands most inviting. The 1000 Island Association has helped in preserving the undeveloped land on the Canadian side. Clayton holds an annual Antique Boat show every year. Houseboat rentals have become popular in the area. The river has park systems on both sides where families can enjoy camping and boating. Today conservationists and naturalists have helped to preserve the islands through research and recommendations to preserve the Thousand Islands as a recreational paradise for years to come.

### **Materials:**

1. large sheets of paper
2. Markers, color pencils, paints
3. Photographs and postcards of local tourist attractions

### **Teach:**

1. Discuss with the students the history of the Thousand Islands and how they became a tourist attraction.
2. List several other local tourist attractions
3. Instruct the students to create a brochure about the area's local attractions. The brochure has to have at least three or more attractions. The brochure has to have a front and back page. Each page in the brochure has to have a drawing and a brief description of each attraction.

### **Guided Practice:**

Assist the students in finding information about several attractions in the area. Have some brochures available for students to view for ideas.

### **Independent Practice:**

The students have to create a brochure.

### **Extended Activities:**

1. Have the students create their brochure on Power Point.
2. Have the students create a brochure on different counties and have a trading card day where the students exchange brochures.



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### **Web Sites:**

1. [http://members.tripod.com/~Oliver\\_Kilian/1000islands/IsIn6-Recreation/recreation.htm](http://members.tripod.com/~Oliver_Kilian/1000islands/IsIn6-Recreation/recreation.htm)

The web site is full of information about the history of the Thousand Islands. I found the majority of information in the summary from this site. It is worth a visit to the site to learn more detail information about the hotels and castles on the islands.

### **Resources:**

1. "Boldt Castle: Heart Island", Roger S. Lucas, Research Review Pubns, June 1992, ISBN 1887287000
2. "Lakeland Boating's Lake Ontario and the 1000 Islands Ports: O'Call Cruise Guide", Editors of Lakeland Boating Magazine, O'Meara-Brown Pub. Inc., Feb 2003, ISBN 1890839108
3. "Decoys of the Thousand Islands", Jim Stewart, Larry Lunman, Peter Steer, Boston Mills Press, May 1992, ISBN 155046048x
4. "The River Rats: The People of the Thousand Islands", Shawn Thompson, General Store Pub. House, June 1989, ASIN 0919431070
5. "Discovering the Thousand Islands", Don Ross, Quarry Press, Oct 2001, ISBN 1550822853
6. "Pictorial History of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence River", Mary Beacock Fryer, Besancourt, 1977, ASIN 0920032036

### **Children's Books:**

1. "The Pirates' Mixed-Up Voyage: Dark Doings in the Thousand Islands", Margaret Maky, Margaret Chamberlain, Penguin USA, April 1993, ASIN 0803713509