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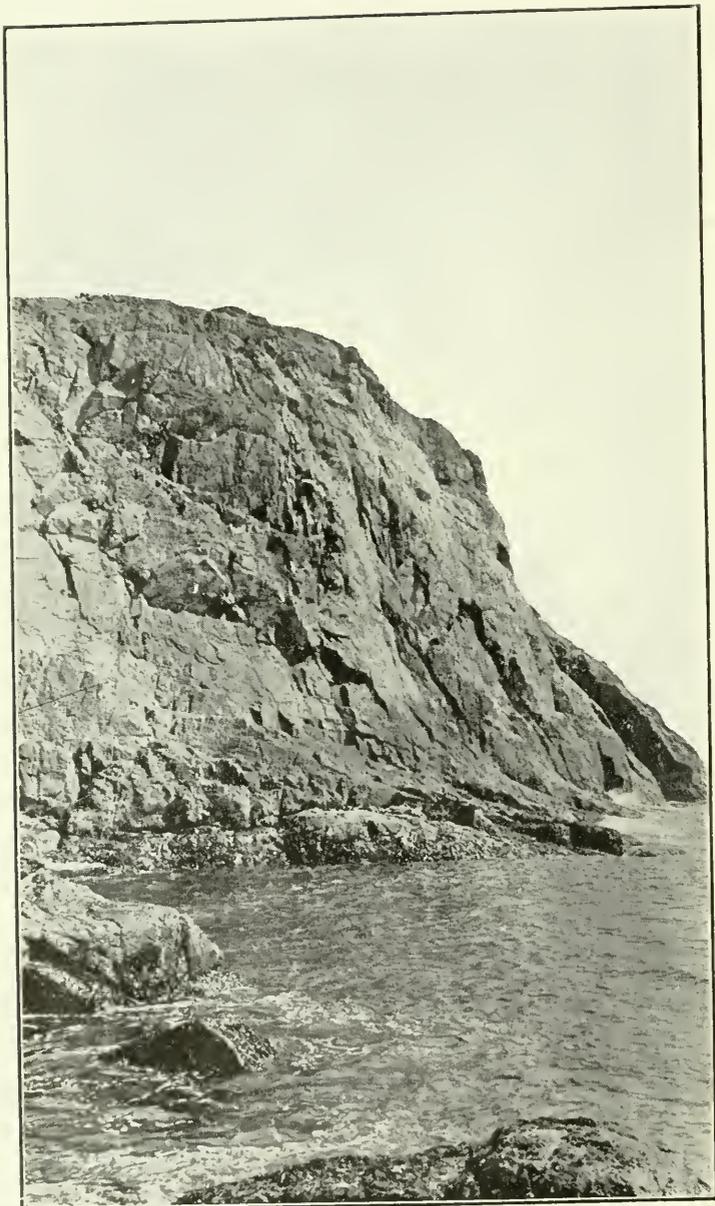
# MONHEGAN ISLAND

MAINE

A Brief Description of the "Sentinel of New England"  
for All Who Appreciate the Beautiful  
and the Picturesque







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A Brief Description of the "Sentinel of New England"  
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*Ellsworth, Wolcott W.*

Hartford Press  
The Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company  
1912

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By

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261

Monhegan Island is situated off the entrance to Penobscot Bay, ten miles south of the Saint George Peninsula, and twelve miles east of Booth Bay Harbor. It is eighty-four miles northeast of Thatcher's Island (Cape Ann), nineteen miles from Seguin light, and twenty-one miles from Matinicus Rock, which lies to the eastward. Monhegan has been called the "Sentinel of New England," and the most famous island of this part of the coast. Today it is the delight of the weary worker, and an inspiration to artists. Whoever visits Monhegan desires to return.

This island is in latitude  $43^{\circ} 46'$  north and in longitude  $69^{\circ} 19'$  west, and is one and three-fourths miles long by three-fifths of a mile wide. Monhegan is remarkable for its variegated surface, rising at two points to 160 feet above the sea, combining bold features with scenes of woodland loveliness and grassy fields. It embraces somewhat over 650 acres, the settlement being entirely upon the low western or harbor side. A narrow harbor, open at both ends, separates Monhegan from her sister island Manana. The name of the island is said to be a

corruption of the Algonquin Menahan (island), hardened to Mun-egoo in the Micmac tongue. It has been spelled in many ways. According to Sewell, Monhegan first appears in dispatches forwarded by Pedro Menendez, Governor of Florida, to the Spanish Court. "In July, 1568, the English were inhabiting an island in latitude  $43^{\circ}$ , eight leagues from land, where the Indians were very numerous."

### ROSIER'S RELATION.

James Rosier, who accompanied George Weymouth to New England in 1605, wrote a narrative of the expedition. He wrote in part as follows:

"They sighted an island on the 17th of May, which they named St. George, but because it blew a great gale of wind the sea was very high, and near night, not fit to come upon an unknown coast we stood off till two o'clock in the morning, being Saturday. . . . It appeared a mean high island of some six miles in compass. . . . At the island we laded our ship boat with dry wood of old trees upon the shore side. . . . Our men with a few hooks got above 30 cods and haddocks."

The Weymouth party made a landing north of Monhegan upon an island, one of the Georges,

spending Sunday there, and held a service of the Church of England. A cross was erected to mark the spot as a token that the land was claimed for England and the Christian faith. Rosier's name is perpetuated in the Cape which lies to the northward.

Samuel de Champlain saw the island a few days later, as appears from his report. He says, "There was a vessel six leagues from the harbor which had been engaged in fishing. . . . We named the island La Nef." This name was given because of the appearance of the island at a distance.

The two vessels of the Popham expedition in 1607 also came to anchor under Monhegan, Monday, August the sixth.

In April, 1614, Captain John Smith arrived on the New England coast. He writes: "I chanced to arrive at Monahiggan, an isle of America in  $43^{\circ} 4'$  of north latitude. . . . It is a round high isle and close by it is Monanis between which is a small harbor where we rid." The captain called it on his map "Barties." It seems probable that there were some white people living here before 1620 and that Monhegan continued to possess inhabitants until the Indian war which broke out in 1676. The island was a rendezvous for ships of England for quite a period. Dermer the explorer was here in 1619 to

meet Captain Rocroft. The former made peace with the Indians at Plymouth.

In this connection it might be said that there is evidence that Captain Dermer may have carried the famous Samoset from Monhegan to Cape Cod eight months before the Mayflower arrived. Samoset, who exclaimed as he approached the Pilgrims, "Welcome, Englishmen," declared that he was one of the lords of Morattigon, "it lying hence a dayes sayle with a great wind and five dayes by land." This was Monhegan without doubt.

In the fall of 1622 Mr. Abraham Jennens and Lord Sheffield each bought of the Plymouth Council lands in New England of the value of £110. Under this sale Jennens held Monhegan and established a plantation. On July 15, 1625, John Brown of New Harbor bought land of the Indians, the acknowledgment of the deed being taken by Abraham Shurt of Pemaquid in July, 1626. Shurt bought the island from Jennens, for the proprietors Aldsworth and Elbridge. "Here," he said, "was a fishing settlement which had been temporarily broken up." The price was £50. The precision and conciseness of this first deed of conveyance of American soil written at Pemaquid and the neat formula of acknowledgment still adhered to in New England are of interest to

the jurist. Mr. Shurt has been called the "father of American conveyancing." In 1650 Monhegan came into the possession of Thomas Elbridge.

In 1672 eighteen persons from Monhegan joined in a petition of the inhabitants of the region east of the Kennebec to the General Court of Massachusetts requesting it to take them under its care. The new county created was called Devon and Monhegan.

On February 6, 1770, Benjamin Bickford of Beverly bought "a certain island Monhegan, four leagues distant in the ocean, off Pemaquid, for £160, estimated at 400 acres with dwelling house and barn, also all interest in a small island, Monehank, 40 acres." Bickford agreed to sell to Henry Trefethren of Kittery, cabinet maker, the isles of Monhegon for £300. The conveyance was not made till February 16, 1790. In 1807 the property was divided between Henry Trefethren, Josiah Starling and Thomas Horn, the last two being sons-in-law of Trefethren. The old Trefethren house was built in 1826 and is the oldest house on the island. It is well worth a visit. The western portion of it is used as an annex to the Albee House.

In the division of lands between Massachusetts and Maine, December 28, 1822, Monhegan, said to contain one thousand acres, was allotted to Massa-

chusetts. The old titles do not appear to have been recognized, for on July 23, 1823, the three owners paid the commissioners £200 for their interests.

### THE GEOLOGY OF MONHEGAN.

An interesting article on the Geology of Monhegan may be found in the December, 1900, number of the *American Geologist*. The article was written by E. C. E. Lord. The following quoted from the article may be of service: "The valleys are almost at right angles to the direction of the ice-flow, which is a few degrees east of north. This main movement has resulted in the excavation of the channel separating the two islands. . . . The Monhegan mass as a whole consists of a coarse-grained olivine-noryte, very rich in feldspar. . . . The rock is of granitoid structure and varies from purplish gray to steel gray with frequently a greenish tinge. Fissure intrusions are of common occurrence."

### THE TOPOGRAPHY OF MONHEGAN.

According to the topographic map of the island, the highest elevations are a little west of Black Head on the northeast and near the summit of White Head on the east. These elevations are 160 feet above the sea level. Burnt Head rises to nearly 150

feet above the Atlantic. While not nearly so high, Gull Rock, at the southeast corner, presents an appearance of sublime desolation and wildness. Against this rampart of rock the surges of the Atlantic break with tremendous fury, the foam sometimes being carried over its top. The island descends more gradually to the sea on the western shore, where the cottages and hotels are situated. The view from Light House Hill is very fine. Mount Washington may be seen occasionally at sunset if one knows where to look for it.

#### MONHEGAN ISLAND LIGHT STATION.

An appropriation was made May 7, 1822, by the government for a tower and dwelling to be known as the Monhegan Island Light Station. The site chosen was upon Lookout Hill, containing two acres of land. This site was purchased from Josiah Starling, December 11, 1822. The lighting apparatus was used for the first time, July 2, 1824. The tower was razed in 1850 and a new one built. Panes of large glass were placed upon the top of the tower, and new lamps and clockwork installed.

A fourth order Fresnel revolving apparatus was installed in 1857. A new frame dwelling was erected in 1875 and the covered way to the tower

rebuilt. The old stone dwelling was demolished in 1892 and an addition made to the keeper's dwelling. The light makes a complete revolution in eight minutes, during which time eight rays pierce the darkness in every direction, the arms of light making an interesting appearance at quite a distance from the tower. The lighthouse stands upon an elevation of about 150 feet, the light itself being 175 feet above the sea. The Monhegan light is called a second order white light, visible about 20 miles.

This is a very important station and for many years has been of great service to the coast navigation. Two miles and an eighth to the west of Manana is a whistling buoy which guides vessels en route to Rockland and the ports beyond, while a bell buoy off the West Duck islands is constantly heard.

#### MANANA FOG SIGNAL STATION.

On August 8, 1854, an appropriation of \$3,500 was made for the construction of a fog signal and keeper's dwelling near Monhegan lighthouse. On November 21, 1855, a keeper's dwelling and wooden tower were erected, and a 2,500 pound bell, rung by hand, was installed. In 1856 machinery for operating bell was put in. In 1870 a Daboll trumpet was installed and in 1876 a steam whistle was used in-

stead. In 1877 a first-class Daboll trumpet replaced the steam whistle. A brick house was erected in 1890, and an air compressor installed in 1900.

Up to April 6, 1876, the two stations were operated as one. On March 4, 1911, \$10,000 were appropriated for improving the light and fog signals at these stations. A contract was lately made for the installation of a six-inch compressed air siren in place of the first-class Daboll trumpet, and it went into operation in 1912.

### TIDES AT MONHEGAN.

High tide at the island is fifteen minutes earlier than at Portland, Maine, and nine minutes earlier than at Booth Bay Harbor. The height of the tide averages nine feet. The variation of the compass is 16 degrees west.

Local time at Monhegan is 23 minutes faster than Eastern Standard time. The sun rises and sets at Monhegan in July, August, and September as follows in Eastern Time:

		Sun Rises.	Sun Sets.
July	5	4.01	7.22
	15	4.08	7.18
	25	4.18	7.10

		Sun Rises.	Sun Sets.
August	4	4.27	6.57
	14	4.39	6.44
	24	4.50	6.28
Sept.	3	5.02	6.11
	13	5.12	5.53
	23	5.24	5.35
	28	5.30	5.25

It was not far to the westward, between Pemaquid Light and Monhegan, that the sharp engagement between the American brig *Enterprise* and the British brig *Boxer* took place, September 5, 1814. Both commanders were slain. The *Enterprise* towed the *Boxer* into Portland. Longfellow has commemorated the event in "My Lost Youth":

" I remember the sea-fight far away,  
 How it thundered o'er the tide!  
 And the dead captains, as they lay  
 In their graves o'erlooking the tranquil bay,  
 Where they in battle died."

It might be added that the walks over the island are surprising both as regards variety and scenic beauty. The trip to Gull Rock is one never to be forgotten. One needs to visit this wild spot in different sorts of weather to appreciate it fully. A

moonrise seen from Burnt Head is one never to be forgotten, while walks through the Cathedral Grove to Black Head and Pulpit Rock will be efforts well worth repeating. The scenic splendors of Monhegan grow on one, so that a month there passes only too quickly, and one truly regrets to see the high island growing fainter in the distance as he leaves for home. The historic associations of Monhegan add vastly to its general attractions and one may spend profitable hours in studying the facts relating to the past years of the "Sentinel of New England."





JUL 29 1912



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