

William G. Boales, Jr.  
104 Grandview Ave.  
North Caldwell, NJ 07006

October 11, 2005

Manitou Islands Memorial Society  
P0 Box 177  
Empire, MI 49630-0179

Dear Friends:

My good friend and brother-in-law, Tom Persing has sent to me a copy of your newsletter for the summer of 2005 and I'm gratified in knowing there are people, like yourselves, who put a value on preserving the past and are willing to make it happen. I trust the enclosed check and family scrapbook will be of help. Perhaps the following brief history of my personal experiences on the Manitou Islands in the 1940's and later will be of help in tracing development of the islands during this period.

After working as the office boy for the Detroit Convention and Tourist Bureau for two years, 1943 - 1944, I asked J. Lee Barrett, the executive and center of influence, if I couldn't find some summer work activity on a farm or resort, and away from the city so I could make a meaningful change for the summer. This was during war time and jobs were easy to get. As it turned out, his friend, Bill Angel, who owned North Manitou Island, the Detroit Leland Hotel and other important properties was open to hiring summer help for the cherry harvest on the island during that period. I was a city boy turned farmer overnight!

There were several farm families living on the island but no other kids. The Jamaican cherry pickers were some of the others on the site and stayed in lodges with bedding of ticking during the harvest. One of my jobs was loading and unloading lugs of cherries aboard Tracey's boat for shipment over to the Morgan cannery in Traverse City.

After the harvest, my father and J. Lee Barrett arrived to take me off the island, following the harvest, leaving the delivery of ice, clean up of the cattle barn and making hay to someone else. The mail boat stopped at South Manitou Island and while there they decided to investigate some property for sale owned by the Beck family. Augie Warner gave us one of his famous rides over the ruts of the island and we did our sightseeing and touring that most others would turn down. In any case we missed our return to Leland, opting for a bunk in a fisherman's shed near the dock. Late that afternoon, Paul Humphry's daughter (Paul was the mechanic on the big island) rode in on her horse to advise the Coast Guard on the death of one of the older island inhabitants. As it turned out, we were able to ride back to Frankfort courtesy of the C.O.

The war ended and I returned to two more years of high school, then college (MSU '51) and the Air Force tour in Texas and England. During this time Dad and Lee Barrett talked up the idea for owning the Beck farm with other members of Rotary in Detroit. They incorporated, and hosted various parties. In the meantime, Dad bought the Huzler farm, hired Ed and Esther Riker and spent several happy summers roughing it on South Manitou. (The poker game was over when the fuel ran out for the generator.)

Good luck with your activities on the Manitou Island projects.

William G. Boales, Jr.