



Get to know your picnic spot

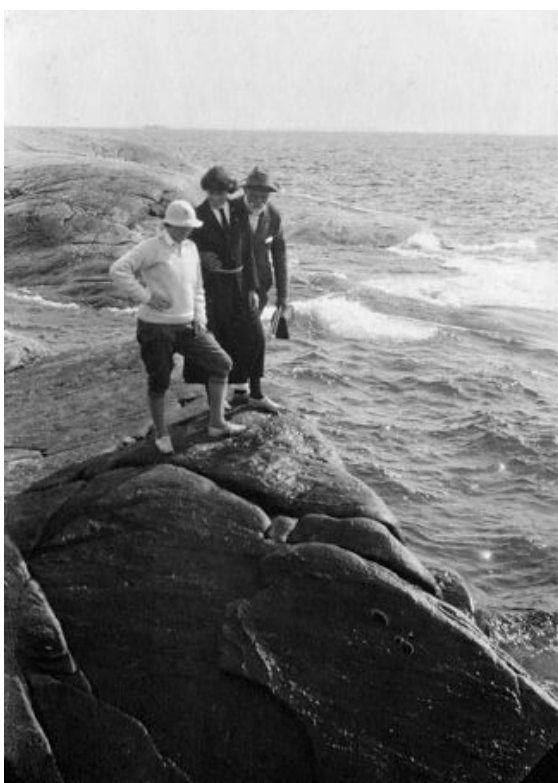
A brief history of visitors to American Camp Island

Stop by American Camp on any sunny summer weekend, and you will find it full of families enjoying the warm pink rocks, clear waters, and incredible view. Spending a summer afternoon at this beautiful island is nothing new - read on to discover some of the people who have picnicked there before you, including those who gave the island its name.



We don't know who the very first people to set foot on American Camp were, but we can guess that they were from one of the Indigenous nations who have lived in the Georgian Bay area for thousands of years. The Anishinaabeg used the islands of eastern Georgian Bay seasonally for fishing, berry picking, and other activities both before and after non-Indigenous people moved into the area. The coastline was also part of an important trading route for both the Anishinaabeg and Huron, who travelled and camped along the shore. It is quite possible that use of American Camp goes back many centuries or even millennia.

In 1850, increased settler interest in eastern Georgian Bay and the North Channel prompted the Robinson-Huron Treaty, which formalized the transfer of much of the land and islands between Matchedash Bay (Waubauskene) and Batchewana Bay (near Sault Ste. Marie) from their Indigenous inhabitants to the British Crown. American Camp and its surrounding islands would have been included in this treaty, and made available for purchase in the following decades.



Pictured: Pauline Jones (friend), Helen Alexander, and Sir Douglas Alexander at American Camp in the early 1900s.

In the late 1800s, one of the Alexander brothers (either Sir Douglas or Bert) purchased the island group now known to us as the Alexander Islands from the Crown. Sir Douglas Alexander was a British subject who married a Canadian woman working and living in New York. His two sisters and brothers-in-law referred to Sir Douglas and his wife as "the New Yorkers", a nickname which ultimately led to the island name we're familiar with today.

The story goes that the name "American Camp" was first used after Sir Douglas Alexander and his family had a picnic on the island in the late 1800s or early 1900s, and it seems to have stuck ever since. The Alexander family continued to visit the island often over the decades, a tradition that extended to future generations and spread to friends and neighbouring families. On several occasions, numbers at these picnics got as high as 50-100 people.

In 2004, then-owner Douglas Alexander donated American Camp Island and several neighbouring islets to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, to be protected in their natural state in perpetuity. The picnics continued, with visitors welcomed to the main island for respectful, low-impact enjoyment of this special place. In 2006, this property was transferred to the Georgian Bay Land Trust, and in 2008 was expanded with the donation of many of the other surrounding islands, again by Doug Alexander.

American Camp has served as a primary socializing place for generations of Wah Wah Taysee cottagers, and has welcomed countless others to its rocky expanse over many years. We hope that it will continue to do so for years to come. The next time you visit, take a moment to think about all who have walked these rocks before you, and those who will come after!

A special reminder to American Camp visitors: Due to the popularity of American Camp, there are times when the island reaches its visitor limit, and we aren't able to welcome any more guests. At these times, the red flag is flown. If you see the red flag flying, please accept our apologies, and look for another place to picnic for the day. **Please also remember that the small islands surrounding American Camp are off-limits to visitors**, and keep your visit to the main island or Andrew's Island.