



CAMPOBELLO

FDR's BELOVED ISLAND

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CONTENTS

	Page Number
1881 – 1921.....	1
1921 – 1962.....	8
Campobello Today.....	13
FDR And Campobello – A Summary.....	20
Afterwords.....	21

CAMPOBELLO – FDR’S “BELOVED ISLAND”

By Les Dropkin

Although it was one of the most important elements in shaping the man that FDR became, the impact of Campobello has been given only brief mention in much of the material written about him. That Campobello was the Roosevelt summer vacation spot and that the first signs of his having contracted polio occurred there in 1921 are often the only references to it. A somewhat fuller discussion follows.

1881 - 1921

His connection started very early in his life when, as a one year old infant, he was taken there in 1883 by James and Sara. This was also his parent’s first visit to Campobello. It had been only two years before when a small group of Boston and New York businessmen, seeing the island’s potential to become a summer resort for upper class families, bought most of the land and built three hotels and a few cottages around one of Campobello’s beautiful coves. See Figure 1. James knew the owners and they persuaded him to come and experience the weather, the scenery and the opportunities for boating. Impressed by their experiences, they bought 10 acres of land and a partially built house; it became their “cottage” when completed in 1885.



Figure (1) 1882, Friar’s Bay : View Of Hotels And Cottage Construction

The rock formation from which the cove takes its name is at the entrance to the bay.



Figure (2) 1884 , The Tyn-Y-Coed And The Tyn –Y –Maes Hotels

James and Sara stayed at the Tyn-y-Coed before their cottage was completed. The name, in Welsh, means “House in the Woods”.

Until very recently there was no access to Campobello Island other than by water. Families would have either sailed to Friar’s Bay or would have taken the railroad to Eastport, Maine and then a boat across. Accordingly, a system of Floating Docks was built to accommodate visitors. See Figure 3.



Figure (3) 1904, The Floating Docks
Hotels and a cottage can be seen in the background.

The original Roosevelt cottage as completed in 1885 is seen in Figure 4. In the years following it gradually grew larger. Figure 5 shows it as of 1915. It was here that Franklin came every year – as a child, as a youth, as a young man and where he brought his fiancée, Eleanor. The cottage was torn down in 1949.

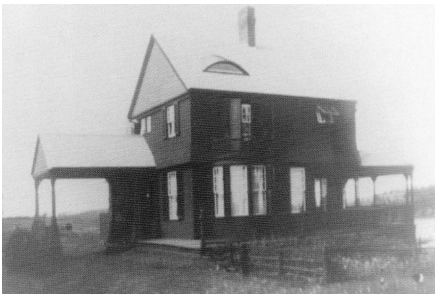


Figure (4) 1885, Roosevelt Cottage

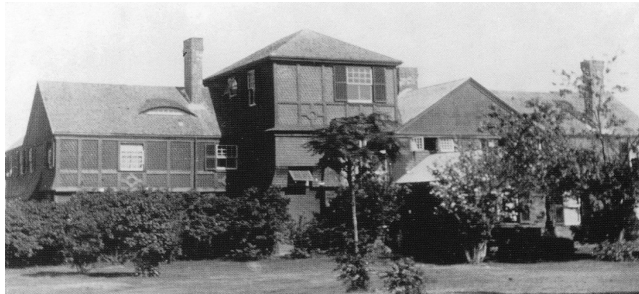


Figure (5) 1915, The Expanded Roosevelt Cottage

There is a very interesting (enlarged) photo from 1914 showing the community at Friar's Bay - they referred to themselves and were referred to as "Rusticators". See Figure 6.

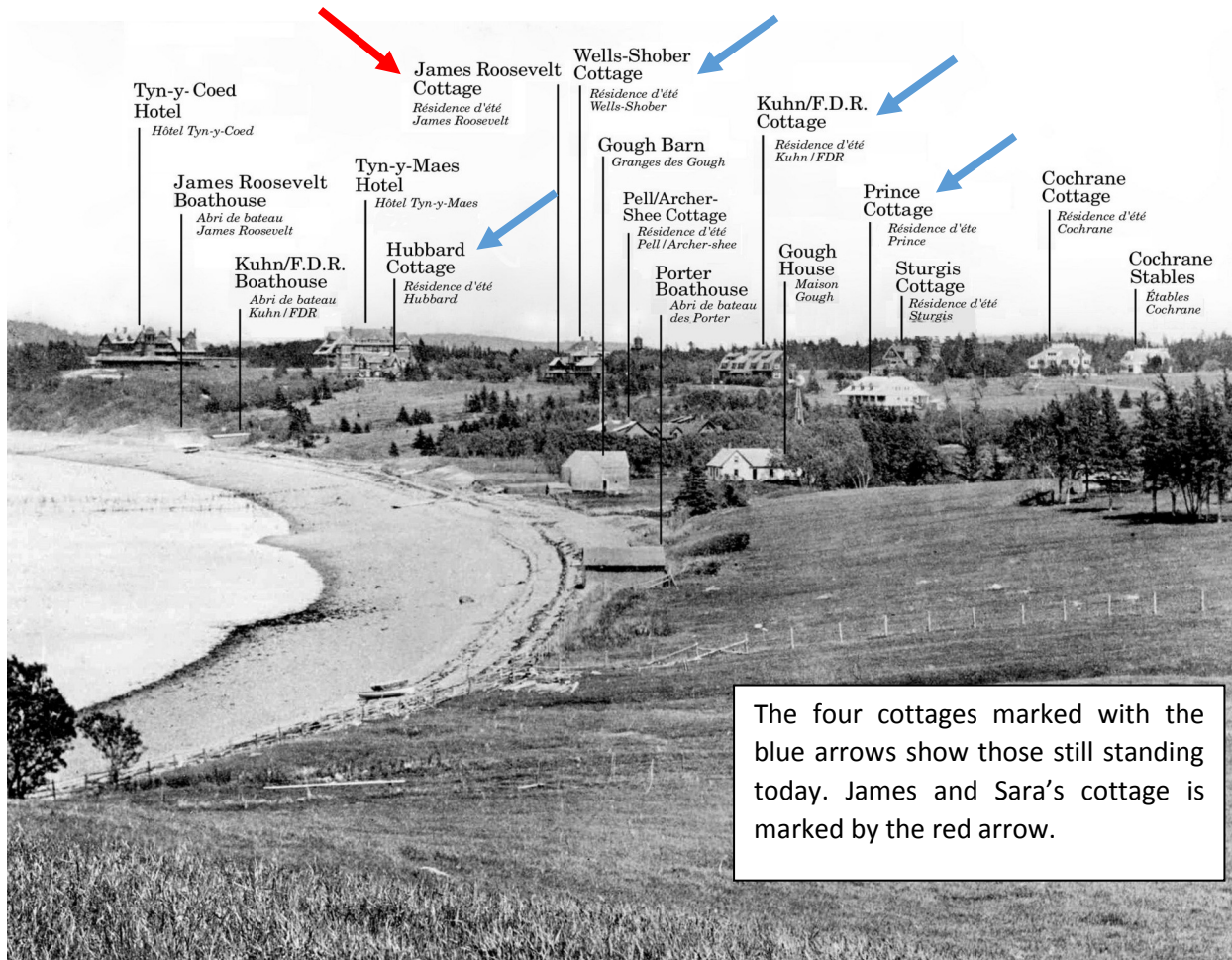


Figure (6) 1914, Friar's Bay With Buildings Identified

One of the last photos to show Franklin with both his parents was taken on the porch of the original Roosevelt cottage during the summer of 1900 when he was 18 years old. James died later that year in December. See Figure 7.



Figure (7) 1900

For James, the enjoyment of sailing – whether for itself, as a way to a nearby island or as a several day cruise to points farther away – was the major reason he had decided to buy land and have the cottage built. For all of the years the Roosevelts were on Campobello, sailing was the most enjoyable part of the summer Campobello experience.



Figure (8) 1899, On The New Moon

Figure 8 shows James and Franklin on James' yacht the NEW MOON. To the right of James is Helen Roosevelt Robinson, his granddaughter, the daughter of Franklin's half-brother "Rosy" and Helen Astor. To the left of Franklin is Frances Pell. The Pells were neighbors of the Roosevelts, both at Hyde Park and Campobello. Sara and Mrs. Pell had each married older men and each had one child, Franklin and Frances. The children were the same age and as they grew up Sara and Mrs. Pell began to think of them as a natural couple. Franklin, of course had other ideas.

For FDR, as for his father, being able to sail on the waters around the island was the major factor that caused him to think of Campobello as his "beloved island". He learned to sail from his father and he learned early and well. In 1888, at age six, we see him [Figure 9] with a younger companion facing stiff breezes at the wheel of the NEW MOON. In turn, the 1898 photo [Figure 10] shows him on his own newly acquired 21 foot yacht, the HALF MOON, as instructor of

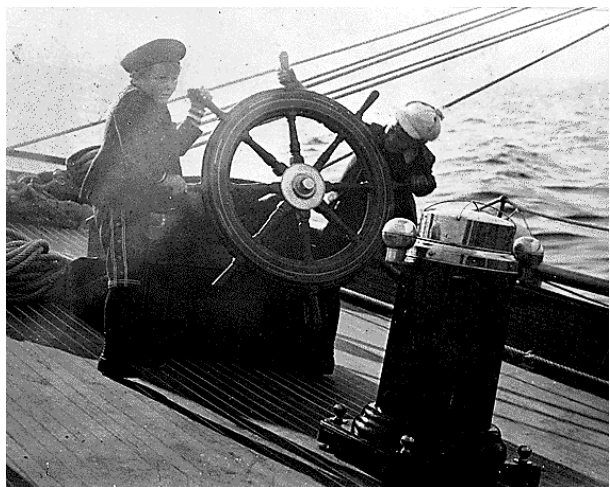


Figure (9) 1888, FDR On The New Moon

Gordon Hubbard junior, the son of the Roosevelt's Campobello neighbor. In the 1899 photo [Figure 11] he is at the NEW MOON'S tiller with his father and Helen Robinson



Figure (10) 1898
On The Half Moon



Figure (11) 1899
On The New Moon

Of course there were many other activities that could also be enjoyed while on the island. One such was playing golf. Figure 12 shows the 17 year old FDR on the golf



Figure (12) 1899, On The Golf Course



Figure (13) 1902, Rock Climbing

course he designed and built, the first on Campobello, when he became interested in the game. [It no longer exists. The one seen today is at a different location.] He became quite proficient and won the club championship the next year. Enjoying the shore was also a pleasant activity, either by clambering on the rocks where they came down to the waterline [Figure 13], or by wading in the water of a cove. Figure 14 shows him with Anna when she was just a year old; with young companions in 1910; and with Eleanor in 1920 [Figure 15].



Figure (14) 1907



Figure (15) 1910



Figure (16) 1920

Picnics would often have been part of a day on which these kinds of activities took place. Figure 17 shows just such an occasion in 1906. We see FDR, Eleanor and Sara [in black] in the foreground; surrounding them are friends and neighbors.



Figure (17) 1906, Enjoying A Picnic

When Franklin first brought Eleanor to Campobello in 1903 until a few years after their marriage they stayed at Sara's cottage. Then a unique opportunity arose. A Campobello neighbor of James and Sara who had become quite fond of Eleanor, Grace Kuhn, left a will which provided that her cottage, built in 1897, together with its furnishings and land, could be purchased by Sara for the bargain price of \$5,000 – provided that it be given to Franklin and Eleanor. This was done in 1909. With the growth of Franklin and Eleanor's family an extension to the original Kuhn/FDR cottage was added in 1915. The 34 room "cottage" also became known as the Red Cottage. See Figure 18.



Figure (18) The Red Cottage As Enlarged In 1915

The addition is to the right.

Now when Eleanor came to Campobello in the summer, it was to a home of her own, out from under the roof of her mother-in-law. It would not be long before she re-arranged the furniture in every room. The family would come with nurses, tutors and servants and it was here that FDR jr. was born in August, 1918. It was a "Rusticator" cottage – no electricity or telephone; light from kerosene lamps; heat from seven fireplaces.

The photo below [Figure 19] of a young, recently married and newly become father in a canoe built for him by the chief of a local Indian tribe encapsulates a life on Campobello that would end when he left the island in 1921 after he contracted polio. He would not return to Campobello again before he became President and then for only three brief visits in 1933, 1936 and 1939.



Figure (19) 1907, Canoeing

1921 – 1962

With the end of the “First Hundred Days” of FDR’s presidency and the adjournment of Congress, he decided to return to Campobello. With James, FDR Jr. and John as part of the crew, he rented a 40 foot schooner, the Amberjack II, and sailed from Marion, Massachusetts on June 17th. Figures 20 and 21 show the Amberjack underway. On his arrival at Campobello on June 30th he was welcomed by large crowds. Figure 22 shows him responding to the welcome. As part of the reception the people of Campobello presented him with a painting of the Amberjack, Figure 23. While there he saw friends and family, Figure 24. FDR returned to Washington on July 1st on the USS Indianapolis, which had been one of the escorting vessels on the sail up to Campobello; one of the very view photos of him in a wheelchair was taken then, Figure 25 .



Figure (20) 1933, The Amberjack II



Figure (21) 1933, FDR And James

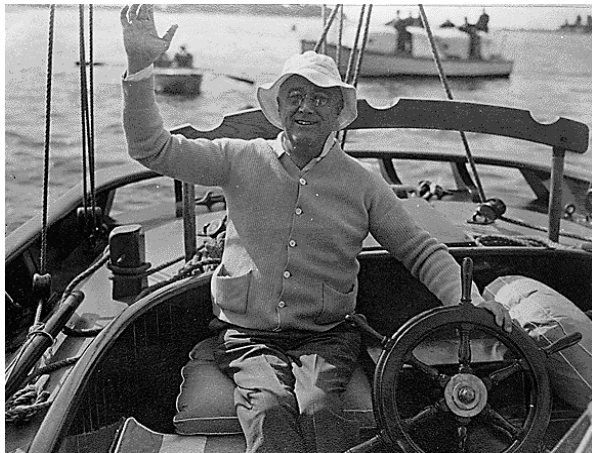


Figure (22) 1933, Greeting The Crowds



Figure (23) 1933, Receiving A Memento



Figure (24) 1933, Seeing Friends & Family

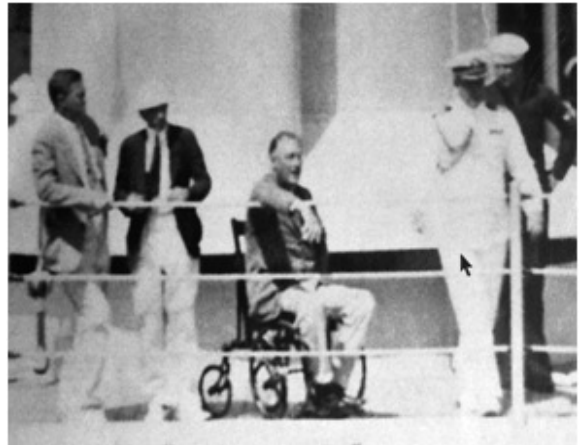


Figure (25) 1933, On The Indianapolis

When FDR returned to Campobello again in 1936 it was as part of a longer vacation around southern Nova Scotia. A 56 foot long schooner, the Sewanna, was chartered for the trip and again James, John and Franklin Jr. were part of the crew. In all these cruises while president the time at Campobello was short. They arrived at Welshpool on July 27th ; hosted a picnic on a small nearby island for friends and family on the 28th and then, on the 30th of July, FDR left on the Potomac, which had served as an escort vessel on the trip. See Figure 26.



Figure (26) 1936, The Waterside Picnic
The Governor of Nova Scotia is to FDR's right.



Figure (27) 1939, FDR At The Benham

FDR's last visit to Campobello was in 1939. FDR arrived in Friar's Bay on the USS Tuscaloosa early in the afternoon of August 14th. He then had a launch take him to the schooner Benham where FDR, Jr. and his wife were waiting to greet him. After a short visit to the Roosevelt cottage, he returned to the Tuscaloosa where he had a small tea party for his family and about 20 of his old Campobello neighbors. At 5:30 the Tuscaloosa left for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

FDR's public re-entry into politics in 1924 when he made the nominating speech for Al Smith as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate was also the point at which Eleanor could begin to chart her own future. One aspect of this was that she and the children began to come to Campobello again in 1925. She continued to come regularly through the years that followed, with her last visit coming in August 1962, just a few before her death.

The photos below are a sample of Eleanor at Campobello over the years.



Figure (28) 1926, Eleanor And Friends



Figure (29) 1941, Leadership Training

Figure 28 shows Eleanor in July 1926 with her Val-Kill friends: Nancy Cook, to her right and Marion Dickerman, to her left. The fourth person is probably Caroline O'Day, a powerful woman in the Democratic Party and part of Eleanor's inner circle of friends. In Figure 29, taken in 1941, she is shown conducting a session in a Student Leadership Institute Training course. In 1960 she was a consultant when "Sunrise at Campobello" was being filmed. The stars of the film, Ralph Bellamy and Greer Garson are seen with Eleanor in Figure 30.



Figure (30) 1960, On The Movie Set

In August 1962 Eleanor returned to Campobello for the last time. [See Figure 31.] She had come for the dedication of the FDR Memorial Bridge that now connects the island and Lubec, the eastern most town in the United States. She was too ill to speak at the ceremony and would die later that winter.



Figure (31) 1962, At The Red Cottage

CAMPOBELLO TODAY

The FDR Memorial Bridge is still the only land connection to the island and is the way most visitors arrive:



Figure (32) FDR Memorial Bridge

After Sara's death in 1941, title to the Roosevelt (Red) Cottage remained in the family until 1952 as it passed to Franklin, to Eleanor and then to Elliot, who sold it to the Hammer brothers. When they tried to sell it in 1962 and found no buyers they donated it to the United States and Canadian governments jointly as an international park. The Roosevelt Campobello International Park was created by an international treaty signed in January 1964 by President Johnson and Prime Minister Pearson.

As noted in Figure 6, only four of the original cottages still stand. Prince cottage serves as a conference center with a large open lounge area, dining facilities and some sleeping accommodations, Figures 33 – 35.



Figure(33) Prince Cottage



Figure (34) Lounge Fireplace



Figure (35) Prince Cottage - Two Views From A Bedroom Window
Looking Across Passamaquoddy Bay To Eastport (upper); Sunset At Campobello (lower)

For most visitors to Campobello, FDR and Eleanor's home is the major attraction. The Red Cottage is a large three floor structure, 175 feet long and 35 feet wide with the first two floors open for tours. See Figure 36.



Figure (36) The Red Cottage

On the first floor are a playroom, FDR mementos, a living room, a dining room and service quarters (kitchen, pantry, laundry):



Figure (37) The Playroom

The playroom contains various items that recall summer activities for the family, including a fishing rod, toys, games, model building tools and a ship model.

When FDR was president, this space was used by the Secret Service.

Both the Living Room and the Dining Room contain original furnishings. To be noted in particular are the wicker chairs in the Living Room and the wicker seats of the chairs in the Dining Room that was the popular style of country homes at that time. See Figures 38 and 39.



Figure (38) Two Views Of The Living Room



Figure (39) The Dining Room



Figure (40) Service Rooms
Laundry (left); Kitchen (right)

The second floor has most of the family bedrooms, together with those for Louis Howe, guests and servants. Figure 41 shows the master bedroom. Franklin, Jr. was born here in 1914. After FDR contracted polio in 1921 he was attended to here by Eleanor and Louis Howe night and day. Eleanor slept on the window seat and Louis Howe moved to the room next door.



Figure (41) Master Bedroom

The hallway on the second floor has many photos, among which is one showing FDR with William Neptune, a chief of the Passamaquoddy Indians, who was FDR's friend and the maker of his canoe. Another shows Louis Howe, who we almost never see in anything other than a crumpled dark suit covered with cigarette ash, relaxing at Campobello with a ship model. See Figures 41 and 42.



Figure (41) Chief William Neptune



Figure (42) Louis Howe

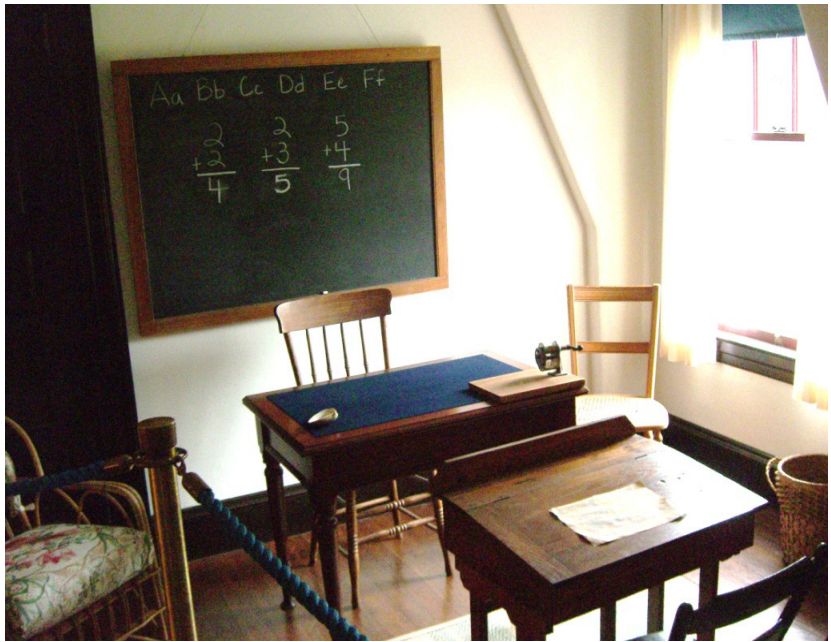


Figure (43) School Room

Also on the second floor is a room that served as a school room for the children when they were growing up, Figure 43.

Not open to the public today, the third floor had servants' rooms, guest rooms and water storage tanks. Water for the house used a gravity force system, with water for the tanks being pumped from an outside windmill.

Also an original structure and open to the public for tours is the Hubbard Cottage, which stands next to the Red Cottage. A “Rusticator” structure on the outside [Figure 44], it has a spectacular interior. The elegance of its large living room [Figure 45], with its views of Passamaquoddy Bay, is enhanced by the elaborate woodwork. In the dining room, the glass of the Oval Window, which is original, was made to the standard of the best astronomical telescopes of the time [Figure 46].



Figure (44) Hubbard Cottage



Figure (45) Hubbard Cottage - The Living Room



Figure (46) Hubbard Cottage – The Dining Room

FDR And Campobello – A Summary

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt...came to Campobello as a child; it was to pursue the orderly summer adventures available to a well -to - do Victorian family.

When he came as a young husband, whose third son was born on the island, it was to taste the excitements of childhood from the perspective of manhood and to pass on to his children the same challenges and rewards he had known.

And finally, when he came as President of the United States, it was to take new strength and composure from Campobello's air and land, from the sea around it, and from the memories of ease his "beloved island" awoke in him.

Edmund S. Muskie

AFTERWORDS

The logo on the cover page is the official symbol of the Roosevelt Campobello International Park. As designed by FDR to be the cover for his private matchbooks it did not have the star over the bow or the maple leaf over the stern. These were added by the Park Commission to signify the joint participation of the United States and Canada in the operation of the Park.

The characterization of Campobello as FDR's "beloved island" was first used by FDR's eldest son James.

It is not coincidental that Sara's cottage, the Red Cottage and Springwood were all expanded in 1915. FDR was busy wearing his architectural hat that year. See my "Architect" Roosevelt, 2005

A description of the 1936 cruise, of which Campobello was just one part, is cruise No. 36 – 7 in my "Cruising With The President", 2001.

The Wells - Shober Cottage, one of the other original structures in the Roosevelt Campobello International Park, is not open for tours. However it is the setting for what



is called "Tea With Eleanor". While visitors sip tea and eat homemade cookies, docents talk about Eleanor's extraordinary life. The cottage also has some accommodations for conference participants, as does Hubbard Cottage and the Johnston Cottage, (a small cottage originally owned by the Hubbards).

Although not part of historic Campobello, there is now a newly opened restaurant [May 2014], named the Fireside Inn after FDR's Fireside Chats. It is the first dining facility at the Roosevelt Campobello International Park since the park's opening in 1964 and has beautiful views of Passamaquoddy Bay and Eastport:



The Park takes up approximately one quarter of the island. Exploring the rest of the island and surrounding areas provides additional insight into FDR's deep connection with Campobello. One example would be to experience Herring Cove where it is easy to see it as FDR and his family did:



Another example, of a different kind, comes from seeing the Head Harbour (or East Quoddy) Lightstation, the oldest surviving lighthouse in New Brunswick, one of the oldest in Canada and possibly the most photographed lighthouse in the world. That it functions today is due entirely to its painstaking restoration over the last two decades by a small



group of dedicated, self-reliant local people who exhibit the same character FDR knew.

Visiting the Head Harbor Lightstation also helps one to understand how much of his sailing expertise came from learning how to cope with the extraordinary tides of the Bay of Fundy. The station is accessible only for a few hours at low tide and then only by climbing a steep ladder. The variation between low and high tides is marked by the dark band of earth.

