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### donation information

www.eagleisland.org/take-action/

 Friends of Eagle Island

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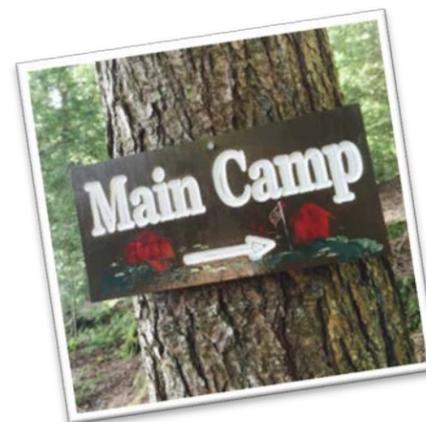


## EAGLE ISLAND CAMP

### WALKING TOUR AND HISTORY



### WHERE HISTORY MEETS THE FUTURE



## A History of an Adirondack Great Camp

In 1899 Levi P. Morton, former U. S. Vice President (1889-1893, under President Benjamin Harrison), and former Governor of New York (1895-96), enjoyed spending the summer at his camp mainland Pine Brook on Gilpin Bay, Upper Saranac Lake. That same year Mrs. Morton purchased 30-acre Eagle Island nearby.

William L. Coulter of Saranac Lake was hired as the architect and by 1903 plans were well underway. On January 5 that year, the Mortons sold their mainland camp, and the next day Governor Morton signed construction contracts for building and plumbing a new camp on the island with the astounding completion date of June 1 the same year. It is widely believed that Eagle Island is home to some of Coulter's finest rustic work.

In 1910 the Mortons sold the camp to Henry Graves, Jr., of South Orange, N.J. The Graves family enjoyed the camp for many summers, but after their children were grown, and two of their adult sons died in tragic accidents, they offered it for sale. When the Girl Scout Council of the Oranges and Maplewood New Jersey, expressed an interest, the Graves family donated the camp to them in 1937.

### GIRL SCOUT CAMP

In 1938, the Girl Scouts opened Eagle Island as a residential camp; girls enjoyed it for seventy years, through the summer of 2008. Over the years, neighbors on the lake donated sailboats, and along with them the scouts participated in the weekly sailboat races at Saranac Inn. Sailing grew to become a strong aspect of the camp, but canoe trips, swimming, backpacking and climbing Adirondack mountains, and other water sports were also popular activities. The Trip Unit of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders traveled the 80 miles from Old Forge to Upper Saranac Lake every summer, and younger units took shorter trips to surrounding waterways. Alumnae credit the camp with developing resilience and independence, and strong leadership skills that have served them well throughout their lives.

### NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

In 1986 the property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 2004 the National Park Service named it a **National Historic Landmark**, its highest distinction for rare historic properties of national significance.

### FRIENDS OF EAGLE ISLAND

The Friends of Eagle Island, Inc., (FEI) formed in 2011 as a non-profit corporation with the goal to preserve this unique summer camp and historic landmark. It acquired the property in November 2015 and is working to restore the buildings and infrastructure, with the goal of reopening it as a summer camp for young people.

*The mission of Friends of Eagle Island, Inc. is to provide an environmentally responsible Adirondack island camping experience for youth of diverse backgrounds with an emphasis on girls and young women, while preserving Eagle Island's natural and historic character.*

### ARRIVING AT THE SERVICE DOCK

You have likely arrived on Eagle Island at the **Service Dock**, used by the staff during the Morton and Graves years to deliver food and supplies to the camp out of view of family and guests. The rustic gable on the Service Dock here defines the small **Power House (14)**, which originally housed the generator. The boat slips on the left side of the dock were later additions. A large wooden map behind the dock will orient you to the features of the island.

Begin by going left along the **Lakeside Trail** that circumnavigates the island.



### MARINER BOATHOUSE

Passing a pump house that draws water from the lake, you approach the principal Boat House, a large rustic structure. When Eagle Island Camp was in use by the Morton and then the Graves families, the Boat House served as the formal entry to camp. Originally built out over the lake with docks in front, it provided storage for the family boats, including the Mortons' "Electric Launch, St. Lawrence skiffs and Row-boats." The Graves called it the Launch-House; it housed three motor launches, four canoes, four guide boats and several boats for servants' use. Probably because its foundations were threatened by ice, early in the Girl Scouts' ownership (c. 1944?), the Boat House was moved up on land—reportedly by the Army Corps of Engineers--so it no longer had pilings in the water. Likely at that time a long wing that appears in historic photos and a small projecting central balcony were removed. For many years the Boat House was the home of the Girl Scouts' sailing unit. The rustic trim in the central gable—which can be read as the letter "M"—may be originally, for Morton, but it also works for the Girl Scouts' Mariners. After the sailing unit moved to the far side of the island, the scouts used the Boat House for a variety of activities, and it was always a popular site for sleep-outs.



Today there are pine needle and bark-covered paths where in earlier days there were boardwalks. Continue to follow any one of the paths toward the main camp. If you stay low along the shore, you'll come to a large block of concrete with two holes to support a flag pole which is included as part of the Landmark. Climbing uphill to the right, you will see the **Main Lodge** with its great log screen in the veranda gable.



Adirondack Collection, Saranac Lake Free Library

## MAIN LODGE

The Main Lodge (4) is the camp's principal building, in the center of five architectural components arrayed in a row following the high ground above the lake, connected by open porches and wooden walkways and hidden among the trees. The lodge contains a single living room, 35 by 26 feet, with a huge stone fireplace and a unique interior log structure. As seen in Morton-era photos, the central table is original, but at that time the room had no taxidermy. The numerous trophies are believed to have been shot primarily by George Coe Graves II, a big game hunter. Parts of the log structure above the fireplace were removed, probably during the Graves' ownership, to accommodate the unusually large moose head that Girl Scout campers called "Adam." Two plaques here record landmarks in the history of the camp: the gift of the property to the Girl Scouts in memory of Henry Graves III and his brother, George, who were each killed in automobile accidents as young men, and the camp's listing as a National Historic Landmark. Beneath the plaques is a sideboard originally photographed in the family Dining Pavilion.



## FAMILY CABIN

To the right of the Main Lodge as seen from the lake, and connected by an open porch, is the two-story **Family Cabin (5)**. It contained a family sitting room with a fireplace on the first floor, along with two good-sized rooms, a smaller room, and two bathrooms. On the second floor is a master bedroom with a central porch, two smaller rooms, and a bathroom. From 1938 to 1961 this building, then called "Camp Craft," housed the youngest campers, and afterward it was occupied by counselors in training and later the camp directors.

Further to the right and connected by the porch is the one-story **Family Cabin Annex (6)** with one large and one smaller bedroom and a bathroom. The camp's business manager had an office in the Annex. The Director and the Program Director lived in the small tent below the Lodge and used the rest of the Annex for their indoor bedrooms until at least 1963.

The Family Cabin housed the camp administration offices in the later years.

## COVERED WALKWAY

To the left of the Main Lodge is a long **Covered Walkway (4.1)** to the Dining Room. Built originally as an open boardwalk, it was later covered with its distinctive rustic roof, perhaps during the Graves' ownership.



## DINING PAVILION

The octagonal **Dining Pavilion (1)** with its beamed ceiling structure and brick fireplace was the family dining space. Three large windows could be lowered into the walls, opening the room to fresh air, screened from insects. The wall covering is a rare textile apparently woven from hemp and sweetgrass, a material from which Native Americans in the region make baskets. The round table appears in a Morton-era photo. Two walls, each with a door, were removed when the large, rectangular dining hall space was added, one of the few major changes to the camp buildings that the Girl Scouts undertook. The right-hand door led to a smaller children's dining room; evidence of it can still be seen in the flooring. The left-hand door led to an open passage to the butler's pantry and the **Kitchen** beyond, a passage that was enclosed when the Scouts' dining room was added.



## GUEST CABIN/STAFF HOUSE

To the left of the Dining Pavilion (seen from the lake), at the end of the row of principal camp buildings, is the **Guest Cabin / Staff House (3)**. It contains two large bedrooms with fireplaces and a veranda facing the lake, one bathroom and a smaller bedroom

in back, apparently added later. This cabin may have been connected by a wooden walkway to the Dining Room building at one time. In the early days of the summer camp the Director and Program Director had offices here before they moved to the Family Cabin.

## KITCHEN

Behind the Dining Room, the original open passage, butler's pantry, **Kitchen (2)** and servants' dining room were opened up into a larger kitchen for the Scouts' needs. In the back of this building were once rooms for the cook and the housekeeper; upstairs there was a room for the butler, two more bedrooms for other staff, and a trunk room. The kitchen wing and the back of the main buildings form an L-shaped service courtyard which once had its own set of boardwalks connecting the buildings. The Girl Scouts' bell is installed in the courtyard and rings loudly enough to alert the entire island and off shore friends to any emergency.

## WATERFRONT

**Optional:** Take a walk to the beach, up the hill through the woods on the Center path at the end of the kitchen wing. Looking down a short path on the right as you go, you will see the Scouts' **Tent Platforms**. This may also have been the site of three platform tents shown in the earliest set of photos, taken during the Morton ownership. Above, on the hill are five cabins, built sometime after the 1960s.

## TENNIS COURT, RUSTIC SHELTER & LAWN ROLLER

Over the hill is the **waterfront**, used during GS camp for swimming, boating, canoeing and kayaking. You reach the beach by crossing the Playfield that is the remnants of a **Tennis Court** with a **Rustic Gazebo Shelter** and a **Lawn Roller** that are included as part of the Landmark designation.

## LAKESIDE TRAIL

From here, you can continue on the Lakeside Trail approximately one mile around the island to see more of the Scouts' **Tent Platforms** and other facilities, passing the old **Pump House (19)** with its metal roof and ending back at the **Service Dock**.

## LAUNDRY / WATER TOWER

**Or you can return to main camp** the way you came, or instead by going the other way on the lakeside trail climbing over **Bugle Rock** ending near the **Kitchen**. At the end of the long kitchen wing is a separate two-story **Laundry (12)** building with washing and ironing rooms on the main floor.

In the early years of the Scout camp, rooms in the Laundry building housed the next youngest campers; it was called the "Rabbit Hole."

The back part of the building remained for laundry until the shower house was built in 1958 and then the campers' laundry moved there. In later years the Laundry building was used for the **Trading Post** (camp store) and arts & crafts activities, while the caretaker and his family lived upstairs in three former maids' rooms. Up the hill behind the laundry is the metal framework of the **Water Tower (26)**; part of the National Historic Landmark. The original wooden tank/tower is too deteriorated to use.

## CARPENTER SHOP

On the left beyond the Laundry, and flanking the back road to the Service Dock, is the **Carpenters Shop (11)**, still in use for maintaining the property.

## WOOD SHED/ ICEHOUSE/ GUIDEHOUSE

Across the road is the **Wood Shed / Icehouse (10)**, and behind it, the **Guide House (8)**, which served as the **Infirmary** during camp. The Graves and Mortons employed many guides to take guests fishing and hunting.



## MAIN CAMP

