



Places – Sites – Monuments History

Spouting Horn

Acadia National Park

Map: W Bates Rand 1911 – Spouting Horn Schooner Hd

Visiting Spouting Horn was one of the early activities on Mount Desert Island that was considered an essential experience by early rusticators and is still considered so today.

"Guidebooks and Promotional Brochures in the 1860s and '70s.

In the late 1860s and 1870s recreational walking, boating, and buckboard rides were the most fashionable activities for visitors. Advertisements printed by steamship and railroad companies promoted island scenery, particularly the interesting rocky coast. Touring the island's rock formations and climbing along the shore, also known as "rocking," was a popular pastime. Many of the rocks were named, some with more than one name.

Walks to rock formations as well as inland mountains and lakes were described in travel guides for the island. Guidebooks written in the 1860s and 1870s harkened back to the pre-Civil War era of mountain tourism by combining poetry written during this earlier period and frequently emphasizing the visual qualities captured in paintings by Cole and Church. Clara Barnes Martin published her first guide to Mount Desert Island in 1867, and other writers, including Benjamin Franklin DeCosta, Samuel Drake, Albert Bee, Moses Sweetser, and William Lapham, soon followed. Though these authors perpetuated the romance of exploring pathless mountains, they also provided detailed directions to these destinations. Many routes were still "scrambles," but others, such as the Duck Brook Path and the ascent of Newport [Champlain] Mountain, were well-developed, marked trails. Tourists typically hired guides to lead them to the more remote destinations such as the summits of Sargent and Western Mountains." - Brown, Margaret Coffin. *Pathmakers – Cultural Landscape Report for the Historic Hiking Trail System of Mount Desert Island: History, Existing Conditions, & Analysis* (Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, 2006) p. 26-27. - Listed as prepared by Margaret Coffin Brown.

The Pathmakers book is the bible for all things to do with the history of Acadia National Park. Particularly see:

Mountain Scrambles by Artists and Rusticators, 1830s-60s.
p. 20-26

Rocking, Walking Guides and Hiking Clubs, 1860s-1890
p. 26-33

"Next in order [from Cromwell's Cove and the Indian's Foot] is Schooner Head, three miles beyond the Assyrian. This must be reached by the road, as between these two points there is an unbroken granite wall rising up straight from the sea. The walk to Schooner Head, like all these walks, abounds with interest. It runs along the eastern side of Newport Mountain, whose hoary cliffs look down in such solemn grandeur, and comes out through a fine grove of birches to the head of a cove. Schooner Head is a noble cliff close by the entrance of this cove. It is probably not so high as the next headland northward, but all things combine to make it more attractive. It takes its name from the fact that on its sea-face there is a mass of white rock which, when viewed at the proper distance, present the appearance of a small schooner. Indeed, there is a tradition that in the war of 1812 a British frigate sailing by, ran in and fired upon it, the captain thinking it was an American vessel. This is not at all unlikely, for one day when approaching the coast in a steamer, my attention was directed to that "little vessel sailing so close to the cliffs." This was at least a very good indication of the name.

Here is to be found what is known as the Spouting Horn. It is a broad chasm in the cliff opening part of the way down to the water on the east, with a low archway on the south side at the bottom communicating with the sea. At low water there is a slippery and dangerous descent to the arch, through which it is possible to pass, and then climb fifty or sixty feet escaping from this horrible place to the top. When the tide is rising, the waves drive in through the arch with great fury; and in severe storms the force is such as to send up the water above the mouth, spouting like an Icelandic geyser.

This is a place where in climbing every one should move with the greatest caution; for woe to the hapless wight who slips when crawling through the dark and slimy arch. The boiling surf will suck him down into depths from whence he would never rise. The climb has its grim attractions, and young ladies even sometimes go through the Horn; yet most persons conclude that it is better to keep in a safe seat and watch the billowy sea.

A fine day is generally given to these rambles, but stormy weather is best. At such times there is a weird attraction about the sea-side. Button up your rubber coat, therefore to the chin, tie on a tarpaulin and go forth with you staff, breasting the storm. The investment will be found to pay. The lush gently-falling waves is fine [Sic], but what is this compared with the sea in a storm, telling its angry thought to these mighty cliffs, and pouring all its wrath against their granite sides? The memory of such a day is enduring..." - DeCosta, B.F.. *Rambles in Mount Desert With Sketches of Travel on The New-England Coast* (A.D.F. Randolph & Co., New York, A. Williams & Co., Boston, 1871) p. 133-134.