

THOUSAND ISLANDS ADVENTURE
August 15-20, 2004

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The 2004 Flying Scot Thousand Islands cruise was organized by Graham Hall to take place the week between the Saratoga Lake Invitational Regatta and the Canadian Nationals on Stony Lake, Ontario. We were unable to get to the Saratoga regatta but made the Thousand Islands cruise and then went on to the Canadian Nationals the weekend of August 21-22. It was a remarkable experience.

We left Deep Creek Lake Sunday Aug. 15 and got to Watertown, NY by late afternoon. We went on to investigate Sackets Harbor, a charming little harbor on the SE corner of Lake Ontario, and had dinner at a waterfront restaurant. On Monday we launched our boat, along with 4 other Flying Scots, at Westcott Beach State Park for a sail to Cape Vincent, NY, at the entrance to the St.

Figure 1. The Boats Prepare to Depart

Lawrence River, about 24 miles away. It was potentially a challenging sail because the first half was upwind on open Lake Ontario and we did not get underway until 1:00 PM. Too little wind and we would not have made it by dark; too



much wind and we could not beat into the 3-4 foot waves. But the winds were perfect and we had one of the most beautiful sails we have ever had. The wind started out light so the water was fairly flat. But as we reached the windward point and headed off on a reach the wind built so we really picked up speed toward our objective, and the water was still relatively flat so we stayed Comfortably dry. We docked at our motel at Cape Vincent, NY in a quiet little



Figure 2. It was a Gentle Sail to Cape Vincent

man-made harbor at about 5:40 PM, a remarkable time for our little boat. By our GPS we actually covered 23 miles.



Figure 3. The Boats Dock at the Buccaneer Motel

The next morning, Tuesday, we headed out into the St. Lawrence River for a nice downwind run to Clayton, NY. We ran the 15.3 miles under spinnaker alone. The jib was used only to maneuver in and out of the harbors. The mainsail and boom were stored under the seat so we had a wonderful unobstructed view of



Figure 4. Downwind to Clayton Under Spinnaker Alone

the scenery and a clean cockpit to lounge in. We arrived at the Clayton Municipal Dock about 2:00 PM and found our motel -- or should it be boatel -- a few blocks away. After checking in we toured the Antique Boat Museum near the dock. They have an impressive collection of classic and antique power, racing, and rowing boats unique to inland waterways and the Thousand Islands. They also run a sailing school for kids in prams and provide rides in classic boats. In the evening we dined at the Thousand Islands Inn, where Thousand Island Dressing originated.



Figure 5. We Dock at the Municipal Dock in Clayton

On Wednesday we had a short 9.4 mile sail over to Gananoque, ON, on the Canadian side of the St. Lawrence. We started out on a close reach to clear Grindstone Island and then headed off on a broad reach under a freshening breeze of 10-15 mph to maneuver down through smaller islands and arrive at Gananoque before noon, a sail of only about 1 1/2 hrs. We came screaming into the little harbor at the upscale Gananoque Inn under full sail, to the consternation of the owner of a classic wooden sailboat concerned for its safety. He did not really relax until we were tied up with ample bumpers out. Clearance through customs was done easily by telephone from the hotel. After clearing customs we took a narrated tour of the islands around Gananoque on a head boat. We enjoyed seeing the traditional houses and boat houses on islands big and small,



Figure 6. We Arrive at Our Hotel in Gananoque, ON



Figure 7. And Take a Cruise of the Nearby Islands

and it was nice to let someone else do the navigating. Our cruise leader, Graham Hall, provided appetizers and sandwiches for the group on the lawn of the hotel, which turned out to be dinner, and then we went to the Thousand Islands Playhouse to see Love and Larceny. It was a cute play and well done.



Figure 8. Snacks are Provided on the Lawn of Our Hotel

A storm came through during the night but our boat was secure in the harbor. On Thursday the wind was still brisk with a forecast of moderation by early afternoon. We should have waited but set sail at 10:00 AM for the 14.3 mile run down to Alexandria Bay back on the US side of the St. Lawrence. The first hour was a wild ride on a broad reach. At one point our GPS indicated a speed of 10 mph without spinnaker or planing. We probably surfed faster at times. But the wind moderated as predicted and we made a brief stop at the Wellesley Island Nature Park at Eel Bay before passing through The Narrows, which was maybe 100 feet wide, and then on down to the main channel of the St. Lawrence. The rest of the trip was a gentle run dead down wind with the



Figure 9. We Pass Through the Narrows

spinnaker flying. We passed under the Thousand Islands Bridge to Canada and enjoyed looking at the many cottages, big and small, and the lush countryside,

dodging an occasional ocean going freighter. On arrival at Alexandria Bay we sailed straight into the US Customs dock on Heart Island. Arriving from Canada



Figure 10. We Pass Under the Thousand Islands Bridge

in a small open boat without power, I don't think they took us too seriously. The bemused Customs Officer was very cordial but barely looked at our passports. While on Heart Island we toured Boldt Castle, one of the major attractions at Alexandria Bay. The castle, with some 6 stories and 120 rooms, was built by



Figure 11. The Boldt Castle is on Heart Island

George C. Boldt, a most successful hotel magnate of Waldorf-Astoria fame, but the castle was never completed. Even though still under construction and restoration it is very impressive. After the tour we sailed on to our motel in Alexandria Bay and tied up at the quay directly in front of our room. After walking around the charming little town we had dinner with the whole group, sharing congratulations and pride that we all negotiated the navigational hazards without mishap.



Figure 12. We Dock in Front of Our Room

On Friday we did a car shuttle back to Westcott Beach State Park to pick up our cars, drove back to Alexandria Bay to pull our boats, and then went on to Stony Lake, Ontario, for the Canadian Nationals on Saturday and Sunday. We stayed with our old friends Graham and Phyllis Lowater on their little Island in Stony Lake. This is the fourth time we have stayed with them, and now probably go as much to see them as to race. We had excellent weather for the regatta and although we blew out our spinnaker in the third race we continued in the next race with a borrowed spinnaker and ended up 9th overall out of 27 boats. It is a tribute to Scot sailors, and probably to sailors in general, that 4 different people offered us their spare spinnakers after ours demised. As usual the Canadians fed us well and were most gracious hosts.