



Lake Erie Islands

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Lake Erie is home to approximately 30 islands. The vast majority of these fall under the jurisdiction of Ontario, Canada, or the state of Ohio. Of these 30 islands, 16 are properties of Ohio with another island (Turtle Island) being owned jointly by Ohio and Michigan. Many of the islands are still inhabited by people but some, like Kelley's Island, have recently become more of a tourist destination during the spring and summer months. One of the more curious islands, Rattlesnake, is privately owned and is said to be a "criminal's vacation spot" due to the incredibly high security and secrecy about what goes on there. Of the uninhabited islands, some of these are nature reserves or are too small to support any kind of human population. The largest of the islands, owned by Ontario, is Pelee Island at over 16 square miles.

Important Dates

- 1840: Cunningham Island is renamed Kelley's Island after brothers Datus and Irad were able to purchase all the land.
- 1848: A lighthouse on West Sister Island is built. The lighthouse is still active and is one of the oldest on the Great Lakes.
- April 1862: A Confederate prison on Johnson's Island is opened.
- 1865: Cooke Castle is built on Gibraltar Island. It is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1875: Golden Eagle Winery, located on Middle Bass Island, was reputed to be the largest wine producer in the United States at that time.
- 1911: Louis Wagner builds his own island over the course of 20 years. He named the island Kafralu by combining the names of his wife and sons (Katherine, Frank, Louis).

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: island, lighthouse, Lake Erie, Kelley's, Johnsons.
- Search for the names of the islands.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- ["The Conspiracy to Release Rebel Prisoners on Johnson's Island"](#) *Daily Ohio Statesman* (Columbus, OH), November 13, 1863, Image 3, col. 4.
- ["Notes of A Few Days in Grape Land"](#) *Cleveland Daily Leader* (Cleveland, OH), November 21, 1865, Image 1, col. 3-5.
- ["Winter Perils Braved by Island Mail Carriers"](#) *Wichita Daily Eagle* (Wichita, KS), May 29, 1904, Image 27, col. 1-4.
- ["A 'Crusoe' in Lake Erie"](#) *Appeal* (Saint Paul, MN), July 11, 1914, Image 1, col. 6.
- ["Man Marooned on Isle in Lake Erie"](#) *Democratic Banner* (Mt. Vernon, OH), February 28, 1922, Image 4, col. 3.