

6 DOWN THE MIDDLE: ROUTE OF THE BRITISH

Walking or bicycle, 1 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours

If you have wondered what attractions the middle of Mackinac Island holds, this is a tour for you. You will finish at the far north end of the island at British Landing and can take the shore road back to town. (See Tour 7.) A bicycle is recommended, but if you are a good walker and have time, it is fun to explore on foot. This route features Skull Cave, three historic cemeteries, the highest point on the island with a magnificent panoramic view of the Straits, one of the oldest golf courses in Michigan and the 1814 battleground.

VISITOR'S CENTER TO SCOUT BARRACKS

An alternate place to begin is the Avenue of Flags after a Fort Mackinac visit, but, as usual, we will start at the Visitor's Center.

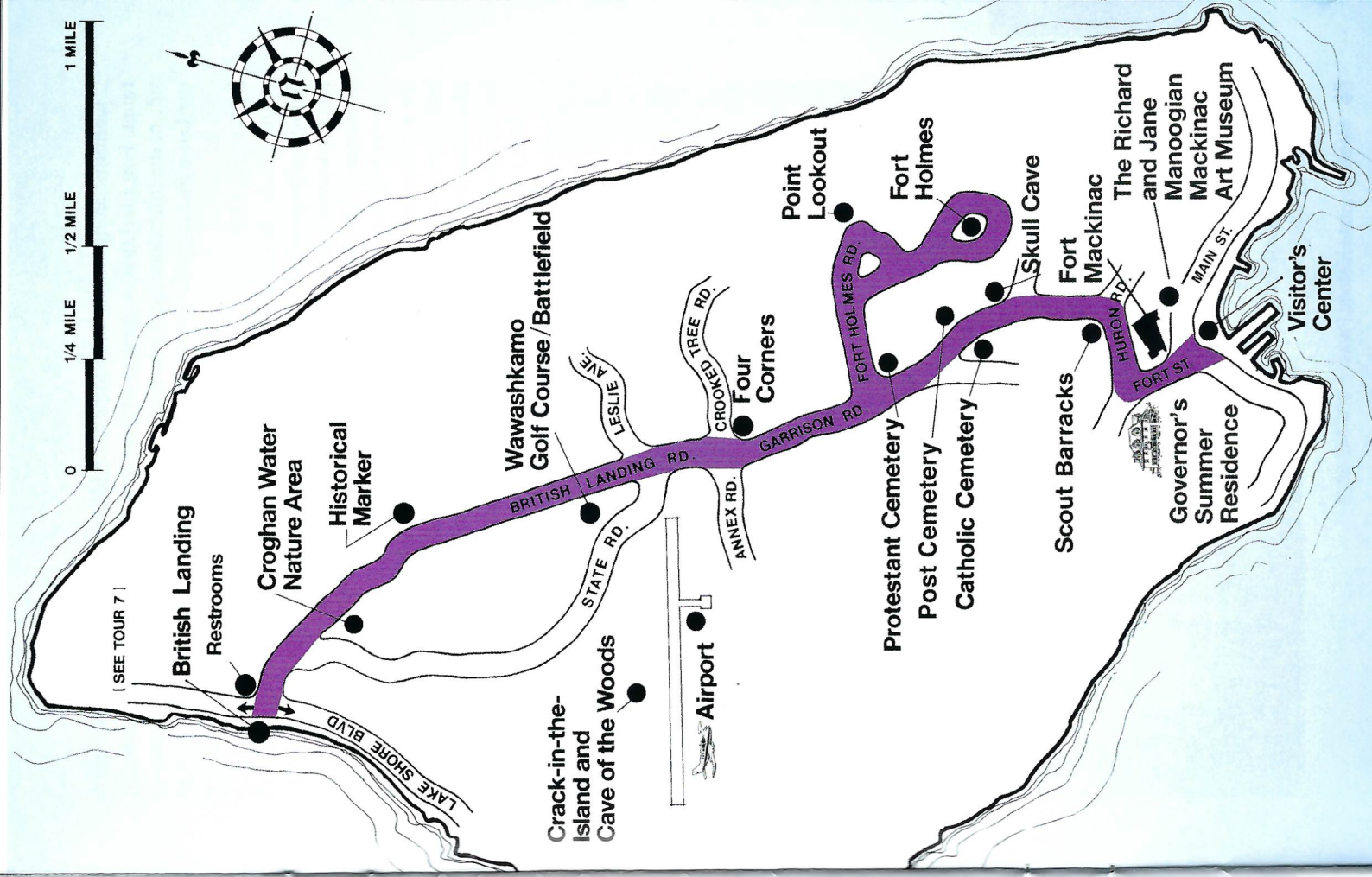
Take Fort Street alongside Marquette Park, up the hill to the top. Turn right and continue past Fort Mackinac to the junction with Garrison Road at the Scout Barracks.

SCOUT BARRACKS

Built in 1934 as a Civilian Conservation Corps project, the Scout Barracks houses Boy or Girl Scout troops from all over Michigan on a weekly basis. Young people serve as guides in Fort Mackinac and other historic buildings. The program began in 1929 with a group of Eagle Scouts from southwest Michigan, among them future President Gerald R. Ford.



Girl Scouts march up Fort Hill.



Continue along Garrison Road past the Rifle Range. Here on this 600 yard range, Fort Mackinac soldiers practiced shooting at targets located on the side of the hill below Fort Holmes. After a few turns at the beginning, the road straightens. Skull Cave is on the right.

SKULL CAVE

On June 2, 1763, Ojibwa warriors captured Fort Michilimackinac in a bloody surprise attack. The fort, located in what is now Mackinaw City, was just one of many British posts attacked as part of a larger campaign known as Pontiac's Uprising. One of the few British survivors at Michilimackinac, merchant Alexander Henry found himself captured in the aftermath of the attack. Fortunately, a local Ojibwa chief, Wawatam, intervened and took Henry into his home. To better protect him, Wawatam hid Henry on Mackinac Island while tensions eased between the British and the local tribes. Taking shelter in a small cave, Henry slept soundly. When he awoke the next morning, he found the cave floor covered with human skulls and other bones. The local tribes used the cave to bury their dead.

Historical Marker.

Today, exhibits and an exciting audio-visual program at Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City describe the 1763 attack and Henry's experiences.



CEMETERIES

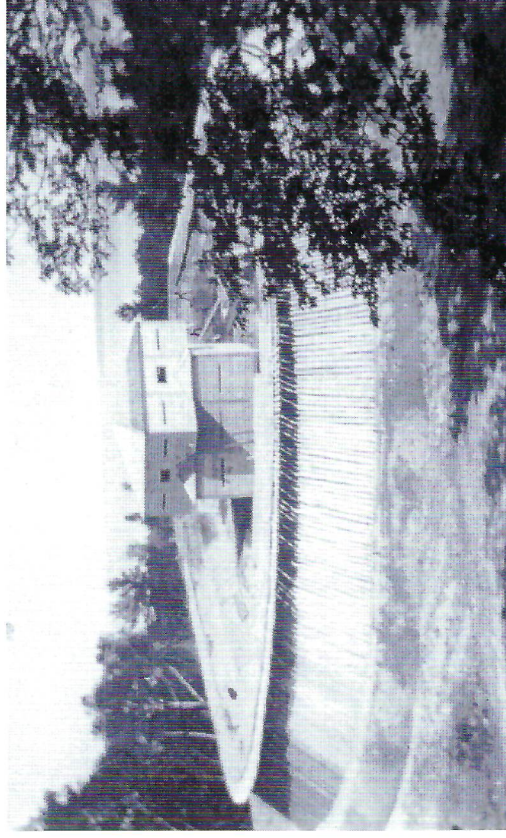
The three island cemeteries are a few hundred feet ahead. The earliest known burials in the **Post Cemetery** date to the mid-1820s. The cemetery contains about 108 burials, including officers, enlisted men, military family members and a few civilians. There are only 40 identified interments, the rest are unknown and a few are even unmarked. The cemetery was closed to burials soon after the soldiers abandoned Fort Mackinac in 1895.

The island's earliest Protestant and Catholic cemeteries were located near churches downtown. By the mid-nineteenth century, the village burial grounds were closed and many of the bodies were disinterred and moved from town to this location. Inscribed tombstones from the early 1800's make interesting reading if you have the time to explore.

FORT HOLMES

At the north side of the Protestant Cemetery, Fort Holmes Road comes in from the right. You can take a short side trip to the top of the island and return to this junction. Straight up the hill the road leads to Point Lookout, which offers a dramatic view of the water and the breccia mass called **Sugar Loaf**. (See Tour 5.) As we continue to the summit, the one-million gallon island water reservoir is on the left.

Soon after war broke out between the United States and Great Britain in June of 1812, British forces moved quickly to capture the American post of Fort Mackinac. Under the command of Captain Charles Roberts, a large



Reconstructed Fort Holmes, ca. 1936. The reconstruction is no longer there.

force of British regular soldiers, Canadian militiamen, and their Indian allies landed secretly on Mackinac Island in the early morning hours of July 17. They marched across the island, hauling a small cannon until they reached the rising ground overlooking the fort. As dawn broke on July 17, Lieutenant Porter Hanks and his small American garrison were surprised to see the British forces arrayed on the high ground, their cannon positioned to easily fire down into the fort. His fort defenseless, and faced with the prospect of an Indian attack on the civilian population, Hanks surrendered Fort Mackinac without resistance.

Captain Roberts quickly took command, placing the fort and island under British control for the next three years. During that time British troops constructed a small fort here, on the highest point of the island, to better protect Fort Mackinac. They named this new post Fort George, in honor of King George III. Today Fort George is called Fort Holmes, for reasons we will learn a bit later in this tour. The earthworks visible today were part of a reconstructed fort built in the twentieth century. *Historical Marker.*

Enjoy the spectacular view before proceeding. The large island to your left is Bois Blanc, literally, "white wood," pronounced "Bob-Lo" by local residents. Much of its wooded terrain is privately owned and has good fishing and hunting. It can be reached by ferry from Cheboygan. Smaller Round Island, with its distinctive lighthouse, is in the foreground.

Mackinaw City is at the southern end of the Mackinac Bridge. Beyond the bridge is Lake Michigan. You are 320 feet above lake level and 896 feet higher than the Atlantic Ocean. Five thousand years ago this spot would have been a very small island with lake water lapping gently about 75 feet down the hill. Most of the land masses now visible were under ancient Lake Algonquin.

After leaving Fort Holmes, follow the road to the left for the most direct route back to Garrison Road.

TO BRITISH LANDING

The good news for those on bicycles is that it's all downhill from here. Watch for horses and be ready to do some braking. The "Four Corners" is not far. This is a good place to stop, read the distance markers, and, by referring to your map, note you are now in the exact middle of Mackinac Island.

Garrison Road becomes British Landing Road here, while Annex Road goes west (left) to the airport and Crooked Tree, east (right).

Continue straight down British Landing Road, where you will see a large clearing which is the end of the paved airport runway. Beyond the clearing are some optional routes. State Road branches to the left and Leslie Avenue to the right. State Road parallels British Landing Road, is almost entirely wooded, and ends at British Landing. If you are exploring, a short trail off State Road leads to the **Crack-in-the-Island** and **Cave of the Woods**, two of Mackinac's interesting geological features. Leslie Avenue, one of the most picturesque carriage trails on the island, winds its way through the woods to Arch Rock. (See Tour 5.)

For our main route, continue along British Landing Road. A short distance down the road is the nine-hole **Wawashkamo Golf Course**, or as it was called a century ago, golf links. Established by summer cottagers in 1898 on land rented from farmer John Early, it ranks as one of the oldest clubs in Michigan. Although players' clothing has changed, they still get to the club the same way their predecessors did, by bicycle or horse and carriage.

Golfers and visitors to the club's pro shop can also enjoy an exhibit about the history of the course, which includes original artifacts from the battle of 1814 as well as the Early farm. *Historical Marker*



Club House, Wawashkamo Golf Course

On the east side of the road is the Resource Recovery Center where island trash is recycled and processed as compost or gathered for shipment to a mainland landfill.

THE BATTLEFIELD

As you continue along the road past the Wawashkamo Golf Course historic marker, you enter one of the most historically significant areas on Mackinac Island. Frustrated by the loss of Fort Mackinac to the British in 1812, the Americans made the recovery of Mackinac Island and the upper Great Lakes a top priority. With a force of 750 soldiers and seven warships, Lieutenant Colonel George Croghan of the Army and Captain Arthur Sinclair of the Navy sailed up Lake Huron in the summer of 1814. They arrived off Mackinac in late July after a voyage of several weeks. Sinclair's warships made a show of firing at Fort Mackinac, but the fort's elevated position meant that the cannonballs fell harmlessly along the beach below. Croghan then decided to land troops on the north side of the island on August 4, hoping to surprise the British from the high ground behind the fort.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert McDouall anticipated this plan and placed his British soldiers and Indian allies behind the low ridge still visible today on

the golf course. As the Americans marched up the road, they came under fire from British muskets and cannon, and the battle became a stalemate. Croghan tried to outflank the British, sending troops commanded by Major Andrew Holmes around the left end of the British line. Unfortunately, Holmes and his men were ambushed by Indian warriors hidden in the woods. With Holmes killed, his attack faltering, and his men confused, Croghan ordered a retreat back to British Landing.



Battle of Mackinac Island, August 4, 1814 from behind the British position

Victorious in battle, the British remained in control of Mackinac Island until 1815, when the peace treaty ending the War of 1812 returned the island to the United States. After American troops returned, they renamed the small fort (Fort George) on top of the island Fort Holmes, in honor of the young officer killed in the battle of 1814. *Historical Marker*

CROGHAN WATER

A few hundred yards past the marker is the Croghan Water Nature Area on your left, with exhibits featuring the marsh. This seasonal marsh is a natural drainage area for rain and melt water from the surrounding fields and woods. Because it is not fed by a running stream or underground springs, it goes through cycles of wet and dry periods.

BRITISH LANDING

It was here that British soldiers landed during their successful attack and capture of Fort Mackinac on July 16 and 17, 1812. Public restrooms are available to the right. Leaving British Landing you have a choice of returning to town in either direction. (See Tour 7.) *Historical Marker*