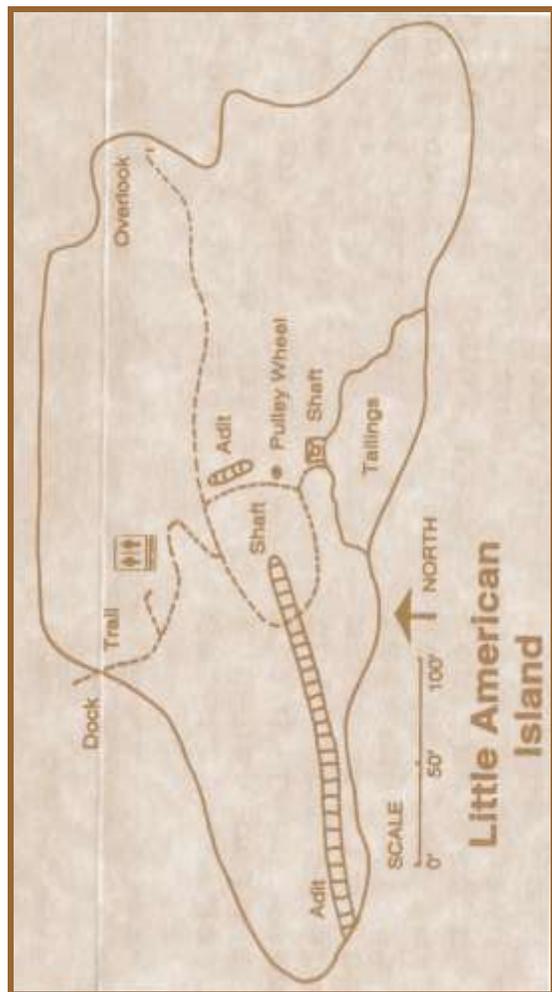


Little American Island



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Scavenger Hunt

Did you find these features during your visit to Little American Island?



← Wheel: this wheel was attached to a winch that hauled gold bearing rock to the surface.

Entrance to vertical gold mine shaft.



← This waste rock left over from the mining process is located on the south side of the island.

We encourage you to continue your exploration into the Rainy Lake gold fields and to find the Bushyhead Island mine entrance.



We encourage visitors to explore the park, but please remember that it is unlawful to take anything from the park.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Voyageurs National Park

Rainy Lake Gold Rush



Stamp mill possibly at Rainy Lake City, 1890s

Is there gold on Rainy Lake? That question was asked by many who traveled to this area. Yes, prospectors struck gold in 1893! Though brief, the gold rush had a lasting effect on the people and resources of the region.

Mining companies dug several mine shafts in the Rainy Lake Region in the hope of getting rich quick. Although no mines are in operation today, you can travel past gold mine shafts and view the Rainy Lake gold fields from Little American Island.

The trail on Little American Island is 1/4 mile long and is wheelchair accessible.

Gold is Discovered on Rainy Lake!



Newspaper article, 1890s

In July of 1893, a prospector discovered gold on Little American Island.

Word of the discovery spread like wildfire, and by the spring of 1894, exploratory pits and gold mine shafts dotted nearby islands. For the next seven years, prospectors flocked to the Rainy Lake gold fields to seek, but not always find, both fame and fortune.

Ghosts of the Rainy Lake gold rush remain in the form of abandoned mine shafts and waste rock piles.

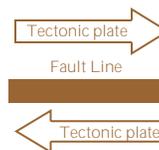
Visitors are cautioned to remain on marked trails as a fall into a mine shaft could result in serious injury.

Geology

While exploring Little American Island in 1893 a prospector discovered a vein of quartz. He crushed some of the rock and had it analyzed. The assay reported twenty-five cents worth of gold in the sample and the gold rush began.

This gold-bearing quartz vein was one of many in a belt of rock known as the Rainy Lake-Seine River fault.

A fault is a place where different plates of the earth's crust meet. The Rainy Lake-Seine River fault is no longer active, but at one time these two plates were sliding past each other, similar to the San Andreas fault in California today. The ancient fault running through Little American Island extends 124 miles further east into Canada and 50 miles to the west.



Rainy Lake's gold-bearing rocks formed over two billion years ago when movement in the earth's crust and upper mantle allowed rock to move up towards the earth's surface. This molten rock was rich in silica, and also held traces of gold and other minerals suspended in liquid form. This mineral-enriched magma pushed upwards, filling cracks in the older rock layers above it. As the magma cooled, it solidified into the veins of quartz we see today.

A Town is Born

Prospectors who rushed to the Rainy Lake gold fields settled in Rainy Lake City. This new bustling frontier town sprang up overnight and was located on the west shore of the Kabetogama Peninsula.

Incorporated in the spring of 1894, Rainy Lake City bore all the characteristics of a wild west town. Seventeen saloons offered whiskey at 15 cents a glass. The merchant district also included a dry goods store, a lumber yard, bank, furniture store, hotels, bakery, brick factory, post office and a school. The population reached several hundred at its peak.

Following the boom and bust cycle of many gold rush towns, the village was virtually deserted by 1901.



Rainy Lake City, 1890s

Photographs courtesy of Koochiching County Historical Museum