

Back about two hundred years ago, Egg Harbor was a cherished spot, better known than Milwaukee or Chicago.

In those days - from about 1650 to 1825 the main line of traffic did not go across the middle of the western state from the Atlantic to the Pacific because its big cities - Chicago, Omaha and Denver, were still not even conceived of. Instead, it poked its crooked way from Lower St. Lawrence up the Ottawa and westward to Mackinac. Here was the first big junction - one branch turned northwest to Lake Superior and its western end. The main line, however, continued westward to Washington Island and then followed the Door Peninsula shore to Fort Howard - now Green Bay - and then across the state by way of the little Fox River to Prairie du Chein. Here was a big junction point because there were numerous fur traders up and down the Mississippi and also across the western plains. All these knights of the wilderness made a trip each summer back to Mackinac to deliver their furs and get a new supply of trade goods and food supplies for the next winter.

The main line of this traffic line was therefore the section between Mackinac and Fort Howard. For most of its length there were numerous sheltered spots well fitted for camping, the best of which was Eagle Island near Ephraim, but between Fish Creek and Little Sturgeon was a stretch of rocky exposed shore unsuitable for camping, except for one little harbor. This was Egg Harbor. Here was a small sheltered sand beach where the bark canoes could be pulled up. Being the only suitable camp site for a distance of almost thirty miles, it was much in use. It is not known what name it had, in the early years. but the Honorable Henry S. Baird of Green Bay told how it got its present name. He writes:

* "In the summer of 1825, Mr. Rolette, a prominent furtrader, arrived in Green Bay from the Mississippi with three or four large boats, on his annual voyage to Mackinac, with the returns from his year's trade. Since there was no vessel at Green Bay, he kindly offered passage on his own boat to Mr. and Mrs. Baird, then "young folks" who resided in Green Bay and were anxious to visit Mackinac. On a fine morning in June the fleet left the Fox River and proceeded along the east shore of Green Bay, well supplied with good tents, large and well filled mess baskets, especially a large quantity of eggs. On the second day at noon the order was given by the "Commodore" (Mr. Rolette) to go ashore for dinner. The boats were then abreast of Egg Harbor, until then without a name. On board the Commodore's boat, there were besides himself, Mr. and Mrs. Baird, and nine Canadian boatmen or voyageurs, as they were called. On another of the boats were two young men, clerks in the employ of Mr. Rolette, one of whom was John Kinzie, and a like number of boatmen. Mr. Kinzie was the son of John Kinzie, the first trader and settler at Chicago.

It was the etiquette on those voyages, where several boats were in company, that the principal person or owner took the lead. Sometimes, however, a good-natured strife would arise between the several crews, when etiquette was lost sight of in the endeavor to outstrip each other and arrive first at the land ... At the entrance to the harbor, Mr. Kinzie's boat came alongside the Commodore, with the evident intention of running ahead of him. Mr. Rolette ordered it back; but instead of obeying, the crew in the boat, urged on by Mr. Kinzie, redoubled their efforts to pass the Commodore, and as a kind of bravado, the clerks held up an old broom. The Commodore and his crew could not stand this. The mess baskets were opened and brisk discharge, not of balls but of eggs, was made upon the offenders. The attack was soon returned in kind. It became necessary to protect the only lady on board from injury, which was accomplished by covering her with a tarpaulin. The battle kept up for some time, but at length the Commodore triumphed and the refractory boats were obliged to fall back. Whether this was the result of superior skill of the marksmen on board the Commodore's boat, or the failure of ammunition on the other, is not now remembered.

The boats and the men presented a rather unusual appearance, and the inconvenience was increased by the fact that some of the missiles used by the belligerents were not of a very agreeable odor. The fun ended in Mr. Kinzie having to wash his outer garments, and while so employed, some mischievous party threw his hat and coat into the lake. All enjoyed the sport, and none more so than the merry and jovial Canadian boatmen.