

## Point Pelee.

(By T. B.)

Projecting out into Lake Erie about twelve miles from the shore-line of Essex County, Ont., is a tapering point of land known as Point Pelee. It is not a promontory, however, but the very reverse. Instead of the rocky or hilly backbone which is characteristic of that kind of cape, Point Pelee is no higher at the center than at the edges, and, for a considerable part of its length, the low shore ridges are higher than anything between. In shape it resembles the horn of a young animal, straight on one side, and slightly curved on the other, except that near the base it widens rapidly, the shore-line on either side sweeping with an easy curve to join, imperfectly, the main line of coast. Like its great prototype at the lower end of South America, Point Pelee might also have been appropriately named Cape Horn.

The town of Leamington is situated on the western side of the broad base of the Point, just where the line of beach starts to curve outwards to form the cape.

So regular are the outlines of this projection of land, that a person standing on its extreme end can look down both sides clear to the main coast, and on the west side, in particular, can see practically every yard of the beach for its full length.

Driving to the Point from Leamington, little change from the ordinary level clay land of Essex County is observed for a few miles. The shore-line for a mile or so from the dock is made up of a sand beach of average width, and a low, clay cliff of four to eight feet in height, which represents the difference in level between the flat country and the lake. Proceeding farther down the Point, the land level keeps dipping lower, until, where the marsh begins, the surface of it is just a little lower than the lake itself. The whole of this marsh land—which is practically the full width of the Point, and, narrowing as it goes, extends to within two miles of the outward end—was, forty years ago, but a vast expanse of reeds and rushes, in which countless thousands of wild water-fowl sported. A considerable portion of it has been already reclaimed, a huge ditch having been dredged out into which the soil water, by means of other ditches and drains, is drawn, to be pumped by steam power into the lake at either end. Beginning at the west side, where one pump is situated, this great ditch runs for a time parallel to the coast, then turns and goes straight across to the eastern edge, where it again runs a short distance parallel to the shore before it stops at the eastern pumping station. When it needs cleaning out, a steam dredge is used instead of the pick and shovel. North of the ditch the land is drained, while to the south of it, bulrushes and cattails still spring out of the shallow water. From the dike road, which runs along a narrow ridge, partly cast up by the lake waves, and in part raised by earth scooped out of the big ditch, a prosperous farming country is seen on the one hand, with comfortable houses and good outbuildings. The ground is level, very, how can it be else?—and dark in color. The black muck, which rests on clay, varies in

depth from two to twenty feet. Onion-growing has of late years become a specialty in this district, and the acreage set apart for this purpose is rapidly extending. Even without fertilizer of any kind, great crops are raised. In the year 1910, there were fifty-five carloads of dry onions shipped from Leamington, nearly all of which were raised on the Point Pelee marsh land. Some trial plots of celery have also been grown,

apex, practically six miles. It contains in the neighborhood of 4,000 acres. This area, which is now a paradise for the man with the gun and the cartridge-case, will doubtless yet be transformed into one of the finest vegetable gardens in Canada.

On the western side, between the lake and the marsh, there is a rather low sand ridge, in width varying from fifty to a hundred yards, about which the lake

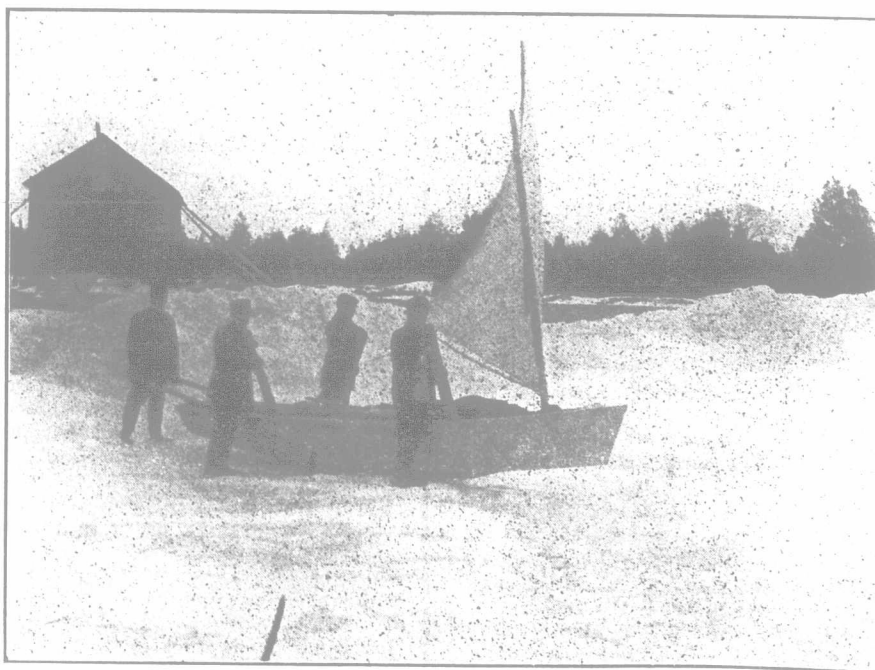


Lee Side of West Shore Ridge, Pelee Point.

and in both yield and quantity the results are said to have been phenomenal, but nothing extensive in the growth of this vegetable has yet been attempted. Land values are rising rapidly. For instance, a young man in Leamington who owns five acres, for which he paid \$100 an acre two or three years ago, was this winter offered \$150 an acre for it.

road runs. This sand ridge is public property, and is unfenced. It is covered with beautiful red-cedar trees, and extends to the outward end of the Point, though for the last mile or two its height has almost vanished, it being, there, little above the lake level.

Continuing down the lake road, a width of ground on the left-hand side



Pelee Island Mail Boat and Crew Ready to Start Back to the Island.

Life-saving station and Point Pelee in the background.

His near neighbor, also a Leamington citizen, who has ten acres, says that he would not sell his for \$200 an acre. "Why," said he, "I can get that much every year for the onions I raise on it."

The marsh land still unreclaimed is in the form of a triangle, almost three miles wide at the base, and from base

gradually becomes less marshy, until a widening stretch of fenced-in farm land is again seen with houses and the ordinary outbuildings. Where the sand and clay meet, and extending inward, there is a space in which deciduous trees, such as basswood, elm, walnut and hickory, abound. The course of the lake road

here is along this space, keeping close to the fence along the front of the farms. Drawing nearer the Point proper, the marsh ends, and the whole breadth, with the exception of the sand reaches on either side, is cultivable. Here, peach trees are being planted, with fine promise of success.

A Government life-saving station, housing a fine surf life-boat, is built on the west shore, about one-fourth of a mile from the actual point. Our illustration shows this building back of the boat on the ice. The boat seen is used for the carrying of the mails in winter to and from Pelee Island and the Point, a distance of eight miles. It is sheathed with metal, has runners below, and is built for crossing either ice or water.

Point Pelee is, as might be expected, the jumping-off place for many of the migratory birds on their annual pilgrimage. Here their lines of travel on their flight southward naturally converge. A party of five naturalists, who hail from places as far apart as Ottawa, Toronto, London, and Detroit, visit it several times a year, and have built for themselves a shack not far from the life-station, which is headquarters for them while making observations. One of them, W. E. Saunders, London, writing to the "Ottawa Naturalist," says: "This is the spot where a greater winter population (of birds) may be expected than in any other part of the mainland of Ontario, on account of its being the most southerly extension." And again: "The visit of the enthusiasts to Point Pelee proved no exception to the rule, that the Point always has something of extraordinary interest for the bird man. This time we discovered Henslow's sparrow (a rare species) in migration." During a visit beginning February 1st, 1909, when the ground was snow-covered and a cold blizzard blowing part of the time, more than forty species of birds were observed. September 18th, 19th and 20th, 1909, the following seventy-six species were seen by these sharp-eyed ornithologists—pages 158, 159 and 160.

The most of us farmers, familiar as we are to the sight of birds, would probably not have been able to detect more than one-fourth as many. So much for trained senses—"the harvest of a quiet eye."

Point Pelee is simply a very shallow lagoon enclosed by a sand bar. The question will arise in many minds—how is it that this protecting sand bar has not washed away and the whole become part of the lake again? What seems from a distance the extremity of the Point, the limit beyond which no cedars grow, is really not the end. Outward of this, the east and west sand beaches, joining in one, continue in the line in which they have previously been running, thus forming a flat tongue of sand which projects far out into the lake. A trickle of water running across it would speedily wear out a gully for itself. But here there will be an almost constant wave wash, and, when a storm is on, the breakers must thunder on it with terrific violence; yet the soft sand tongue still continues to be shot straight out, practically unmoved. How is it? Doubtless the unseen current which first cast up the sand keeps it still in its place.

There is no need to travel hundreds of miles or to cross the ocean in order to see fine sights. Essex County is extremely rich in soil, yet flat and uninteresting from a scenic point of view. But, jutting out from its coast, there is this singular cape fringed on the western side with its spire-pointed red cedars—elsewhere unknown in the county, as indeed are all native evergreens—which may well be added to the long list of nature's beauty or wonder spots within easy reach.