

Autos Across Mackinac: War Rations Take Toll on Michigan Tourism

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boarded a D&C steamship for the return trip home. His mother had ridden up on the ship to accompany her son homeward.

With the end of vacation season, ferry workers found themselves in a vacation situation not to their liking. The National Maritime Union of America, CIO, polled its Great Lakes members on the question of giving up vacation rights under existing contracts for the duration of the war. The "right" had not found favor with some members, particularly among licensed crewmen who felt a responsibility for their boats, whether they were on a forced "vacation." The enforced "vacation" looked nearly permanent from the perspective of many ferry workers, particularly with the season ending, and little prospect for improved traffic at any time in the near future.

Fortunately, September traffic didn't fall off quite as much as many expected it would. The decrease was only 11.6%, instead of the 30%-plus drop that had been projected. The annual average, however, still hovered at about a 30% loss.

As the few tourists left the area, resort operators turned toward the 1942 hunting season with trepidation. No one expected much improvement in November traffic, either. There were even rumors that the 1942 deer hunt might be canceled. The army could better use shells that would be used by the hunters, or so the thinking went. That, combined with increasing transportation difficulties, was a major cause for worry. But P. J. Hoffmaster, the Conservation Department director, put minds at ease when he announced the hunt would go on as usual. Most hunters already had their shells, he reasoned, and the nearly 10 million pounds of fresh meat the hunt realized would help many families, if meat were to be rationed, another persistent rumor making the rounds. Finally, Hoffmaster pointed out the need to cull the state's deer herd, which, without hunting, would grow much too large to support itself with the forage available. Besides, the director noted, "Someday we may more appreciate the training and experience obtained by more than 150,000 men armed with rifles who spend a couple of weeks in our north woods every fall."

Still, few hunters were expected,



This is another view of the same lineup. Accommodations in the region were strained to capacity, restaurants ran out of food, and to keep their place in line, motorists idled their cars until they ran out of gas. Some stations installed 50-foot hoses to reach cars still waiting in the line out on the street. Hunting season provided the one bright spot of an otherwise bleak tourist season, already hampered by security measures prohibiting fishing from any of the area's Lake Huron piers. (L.L. Cook postcard from author's collection)

especially when Washington announced that, in addition to automobiles, tires, and sugar, coffee and gasoline would join the list of rationed commodities in late November. Resort operators resigned themselves to drinking about one cup of coffee a day, while they mulled the thought that hunters would stay home, rather than use what little gasoline they might already have to travel to hunt area hunting grounds.

The hunting season wasn't the only thing on Michigan minds that fall. The political season also got underway, with Republican Harry F. Kelley getting the GOP nomination for governor, unopposed at the convention for the first time in Michigan history. Kelley refused to name a slate to run with him against Democratic Governor Van Wagoner, saying the party was "unbossed," and it was the convention delegate's job to name one for him. Van Wagoner made much to-do about the Democratic rally behind him, which allowed him to name a slate with no such problems. Republican Homer Ferguson ran against incumbent Democratic Senator Prentiss

Brown, and incumbent Congressman Fred Bradley would face former Soo Mayor Paul L. Adams for his House seat. There was no word on how any of those elected would manage to travel to Lansing or from Michigan to Washington.

There was one piece of good news for travel in September. The steel for the new Cut River Bridge

even the historic cannons at Fort Mackinac were targeted for the war effort. Island residents agreed to sacrifice the dozen or so War of 1812 artifacts, but members of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission pleaded that the guns be spared, at least until wooden models and accurate drawings and sketches of them could be made.



The threat of rationing meant a drop of 50% in cross-straits traffic, and on Labor Day, one boat was pulled from the schedule. A similar loss was projected for 1942's hunting season. The rationing delay meant the hunting rush was greater than anticipated. With only three boats in service, hunters waited in line nearly eight hours to cross the Straits. This photo may not be from that exact era, but it gives the idea of what traffic in Mackinaw City looked like. (L.L. Cook postcard from author's collection)

arrived, and erection of the structure began in mid-month. The highest and longest highway bridge in Northern Michigan would carry Highway 2 for a distance of 641 feet at a height up to 146 feet above the river, a vast improvement for travelers.

The incoming steel was quite a contrast to that which was leaving the area. To help the war effort, cities conducted scrap metal drives. Anything not being actively used was fair game for the scrappers, and it became a matter of civic pride to collect more tons of scrap metal than the neighbors. On Mackinac Island,

The islanders collected nearly 150 tons of scrap metal, excluding the cannons. To move it, on the morning of October 15, the *City of Munising*, newly returned from River Rouge, was sent to haul 34 big trucks to the Island at the request of Mayor Arthur Chambers and his salvage committee. The trucks and drivers were donated by area hauling businesses and, for a day, the no-motor-vehicles rule was overlooked so the materials could be loaded, brought back aboard the ferry, and shipped directly to a scrap dealer in Manistique when the boat arrived in St. Ignace about 6 p.m.

Ferry dock men also got a treat in October when a quintet of Detroit Tigers players crossed the Straits, returning from a visit to Drummond Island. Players Paul Dizzy Trout, Dick Wakefield, Barney McCoskey, Johnny Lipon, and Hal Newhouser took time to talk with the ferrymen, most of whom were avid sports fans. The players were more noticeable because there was so little other travel. The ferries were accurately reflecting the curtailment of non-essential travel throughout the Midwest.

Prior to the November deadline for gas rationing, Michigan imposed "voluntary rationing," and unneeded auto travel practically trickled to a halt. Tourist travel, non-essential as it was, dropped 45% during July and August, the busiest tourist months. September's figures, made up more of "business" travel, only dropped 11%. The figures released by Commissioner Kennedy didn't account for October, a "business" travel month, which still saw a decline of 25.2%.

There was a lot of accounting to do following the defeat of several highly visible candidates in the November elections. Governor Murray D. "Pat" Van Wagoner might well have heeded his aides who previously advised him it was bad luck to call the legislature back into special session. He continued Michigan's 30-year tradition of one-term governors when Harry F. Kelley defeated him. Michigan's one-term Junior Senator Prentiss M. Brown also found himself looking for new employment. By some 20,000 votes, he lost his bid for

for the property's true value, which Brown felt might be a conflict of interest, he instead offered to let a public commission, or the courts, determine a fair price for the land. Several other property owners had rejected the state's initial offers as well, and the entire matter went to a public hearing and trial on December 8. The outcome was too late to be a factor in the election.

As Michiganders digested the election news, they also learned that the start of gas rationing had been postponed until December 1. Michigan teachers had been asked to cancel classes for three days in early November to register gas rationing card applicants, but the news arrived just in time to keep schools open for another week. The school closures finally took place November 18 through 20. If that weren't enough, Washington announced that 18 and 19 year old men would now be subject to the military draft.

Those news items gave hunting season just the shot in the arm it needed, and while the number of hunters cars carried on the ferries was about 12.5% below previous years, it was better than the 50% or more loss resort operators had been expecting. Better yet, each auto carried more hunters than ever before. Paid passenger travel was up higher than ever. It turned out to be a record season.

With only three State boats running, northbound hunters waited up to eight hours to cross the Straits. Heavier demands for railroad traffic meant the *Chief Wawatam* could only help occasionally. The *Sainte Marie (II)* had no crew and was not available during the rush. Motorists who cut in line were threatened with having their cars thrown in the lake. Rather than get out of line for gasoline, hunters shuttled gas cans to their cars. Some service stations attached 50-foot hoses to their pumps to reach customers cars in line on the street.

The situation was compounded on Friday when a convoy of army troops headed for Fort Brady was given priority ferry loading during the rush. One hunter protested loudly, and other hunters ganged up to chase him off the dock.

Accommodations on both sides of the Straits were jammed to capacity and beyond. This was no "kerosene-kan-kontingent" as had occurred 20 years before. Detroit factory workers, flush with high paychecks, weren't planning on camping. They were looking for first caliber accommodations, and entertainment both in and out of the woods to match.

Yet, even with all the out-of-town hunters, the first buck of the season was bagged by Captain Paddy Brown of the *Chief Wawatam*, who went out early on opening day before his shift began on the ferry. By the time the season ended, the buck count nearly approached the record kill of the year before. However, the total of deer taken was much lower, as does made a large percentage of the 1941 hunt. Most of the hunters headed home before Thanksgiving. The rush of southbound ferry traffic again taxed the boats in service, though not to the extent of the northbound rush. Most motorists waited only two or three hours before boarding. All in all, the hunting season ended as a surprising success.

The deer hunt wasn't the only worry for outdoorsmen that November. By Thanksgiving, fish-

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