

PH 366234

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 10 1978

DATE ENTERED MAR 8 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Edisen Fishery

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Rock Harbor

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Isle Royale National Park

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

11th

STATE

Michigan

VICINITY OF

CODE 2126

COUNTY

Keweenaw

CODE

083

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Midwest Region Office

STREET & NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Eagle Harbor Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Eagle Harbor

STATE

Michigan

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Midwest Region  
National Park Service

DATE

August 1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Midwest Region, National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

STATE  
Nebraska

68102

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                 |   | CHECK ONE                                      | CHECK ONE  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> _EXCELLENT       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _GOOD            | <input type="checkbox"/> _RUINS                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ALTERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> _MOVED    DATE _____      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> _UNEXPOSED               |  |  |

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Edison Fishery is a commercial fishing complex of seven buildings, constructed over a forty year span between 1895 and 1934. A dory-style whale boat with outboard rudder and a decked-over bow, used for almost fifty years of fishing at Isle Royale, is an integral part of the complex.

The complex is situated on the south shore of Rock Harbor, approximately one-quarter mile west of the Rock Harbor Lighthouse. The modest buildings, constructed and maintained over the years with locally available materials, are scattered on a semi-open site thick with wild flora and fauna and some cultivated shrubbery, including rose bushes brought to the island from Minnesota by Peter Edison over thirty-five years ago. Scattered throughout the site are wooden packing barrels, net dryers, fish cleaning tables, nets, floats and other objects from the fishing industry.

On the shore, the fish house, built in 1900 by local fisherman - a Mr. Mattson and Mr. Anderson - is surrounded on three sides by a log and plank dock. The one-story building is constructed of horizontal logs with saddle notching at the northwest half and is of frame construction, with vertical flushboarding, at the southeast. The gabled roof is sheathed with wood shingles. There is a wooden plank door on the northwest and northeast elevations. Fenestration is of random size and placement.

Approximately twenty-two feet southeast of the fish house is the Edison residence, built circa 1900 by Mr. Anderson. The small one-story combination horizontal log and shiplapped dwelling, is built on a log foundation and has a gabled roof sheathed with asphalt roll. Fenestration is of random size and location, with entrances to the three-room dwelling on the northeast and northwest elevations. Across the front (northeast) and side elevations, sawtooth trim ornaments the fascia. On the interior the wooden floors are laid in tongue-and-groove construction. Heating and cooking is by wood stove, with light supplied by kerosene lamps. There is no running water.

The net house, constructed in 1895 by Mr. Mattson, is located five feet southwest of the Edison residence. The National Park Service is currently (1975) reconstructing the deteriorated one-story building. The earliest part of the structure, at the northeast, is of saddle-notched, horizontal log construction, while the shed-roofed portion at the southwest is of frame construction with horizontal planks, sheathed on the exterior with tarpaper. A simple plank door provides the entranceway on the southwest elevation, behind the studding and shed roof of an unfinished entrance lean-to. Windows have been removed from their square openings.

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Michigan's Statewide Survey

August 1976

X State

Michigan History Division  
Department of State  
Lansing, Michigan 48918

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The "honeymoon cottage," an auxiliary sleeping cabin, built in 1925 by Peter Edisen, is located twenty-seven feet south of the net house. This one-story, one room, frame, shiplapped structure is built on a log foundation. There is a simple, two-paneled door on the front (northwest) elevation, and one small window on the southeast elevation. The gabled roof is sheathed with asphalt roll.

Twenty-six feet southeast of the Edisen residence is another sleeping cabin, built by Mattson and Anderson in 1895. The one-story building is constructed of horizontal logs with saddle notching, and chinked with moss and cloth; asphalt roll covers the gabled roof. On the northwest elevation is a vertical plank door. Driftwood ornaments the exterior walls.

A chicken coop, built in 1934 by Mike Johnson, Peter Edisen's father-in-law, is situated on a slight rise in the land, forty-three feet east of the log sleeping cabin. Built on a high log foundation, the frame, horizontal flushboarded building has a shallow-pitched gabled roof sheathed with asphalt roll. There is a plank door, rising the full height of the front (northwest) gable elevation. Several of the square window openings have been boarded shut.

The privy, somewhat later in date, is located on a rise approximately fifty-five feet northeast of the chicken coop. Of frame construction, its horizontal plank walls, and shed roof are sheathed with asphalt shingles. A vertical plank door is on the west elevation.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD                                    | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE     | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES 1895;1900;1925;1934 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Builders: Mattson, Anderson, Mike Johnson, Peter Edisen

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Edisen Fishery is the best surviving example of a commercial fishery in continuous use at Isle Royale. The structures and variety of fishing equipment in the complex illustrate the development of commercial fishing techniques on Lake Superior since the beginning of the twentieth century. The modest buildings, constructed and maintained largely with a variety of locally available materials, reflect the response to the need for shelter on this remote island, traditionally occupied only six months of the year.

Isle Royale's main economic activities have been copper mining, commercial fishing and tourism. Commercial fishing has remained the most successful endeavor, with evidence of its existence at Isle Royale from the 1830s, though there is some archeological evidence that there were fisheries at Isle Royale in the late eighteenth century. The early fishing settlements, established by the French and Indians, were scattered around the islands near shoals where fish were plentiful. Lake trout, herring, and siskiwit were packed with salt in kegs and picked up by schooners traveling to the mainland.

In the 1880s the fishing industry boomed. The railroad had reached the western Lake Superior area, inducing the rapid growth of Ashland, Wisconsin and the twin ports of Duluth/Superior. Refrigerator cars had also been developed, along with methods for freezing fish, allowing wider distribution of this Isle Royale commodity. Boat technology supplied more efficient steam-powered vessels for carrying the kegs of fish to the mainland, while the Mackinaw boat, broad at the bow, provided more storm-worthy transportation for the fisherman. In the early twentieth century, gas-powered boats were first used.

By the turn of the century the fishing population was comprised mainly of Scandinavians who settled at Isle Royale because its physical environment closely resembled that of their native lands. Fisherman came to Isle Royale in mid-April and returned to their homes, mainly in Minnesota, by early November. They occupied fishing complexes already in existence, or erected their own buildings, often from the materials of local abandoned mining and fishing settlements. Because the season at Isle Royale was short, fishing time was at a premium, thus requiring that all structures be easily and quickly assembled. The remoteness of the island also contributed to the vernacular character of the structures. Most of the buildings are small, unornamented and built directly on the ground with a variety of wood materials.

### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Rakestraw, Lawrence, Commercial Fishing on Isle Royale. Isle Royale Natural History Association, 1968.  
 Isle Royale National Park Building Folders #s 137, 138, 139, 140, 145, 146.  
 Interview with Peter Edisen by Lawrence Rakestraw, Sept. 1956; on file at Isle Royale National Park.  
 Personal interview with Peter Edisen at Rock Harbor, Aug. 18, 1975.

### 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |         |    |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |      |         |   |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |
|---|------|---------|----|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|------|---------|---|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|
| A | 16   | 8       | 21 | 5 | 0 | 5        | 3 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 5    | 0       | B |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING |    |   |   | NORTHING |   |   |   |   | ZONE | EASTING |   |  |  | NORTHING |  |  |  |  |
| C |      |         |    |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |      |         | D |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

### 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Jane A. McLuckie, Researcher

ORGANIZATION Department of Art

DATE April 1976

STREET & NUMBER Michigan State University

TELEPHONE 1-517-355-7610

CITY OR TOWN East Lansing

STATE Michigan 48824

### 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

*[Signature]*  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National  State  Local   Regional

*[Signature]*  
FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE  
TITLE Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE AUG 3 1976

|  |  |                    |
|--|--|--------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY   | I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER | DATE <u>3/8/77</u> |
| CHIEF  | <i>[Signature]</i>   | DATE <u>3/3/77</u> |
| DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION | <i>[Signature]</i>   | DATE <u>3/3/77</u> |
| ATTEST:  | <i>[Signature]</i>   |                    |
| KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER                          |  |                    |

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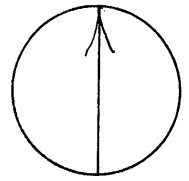
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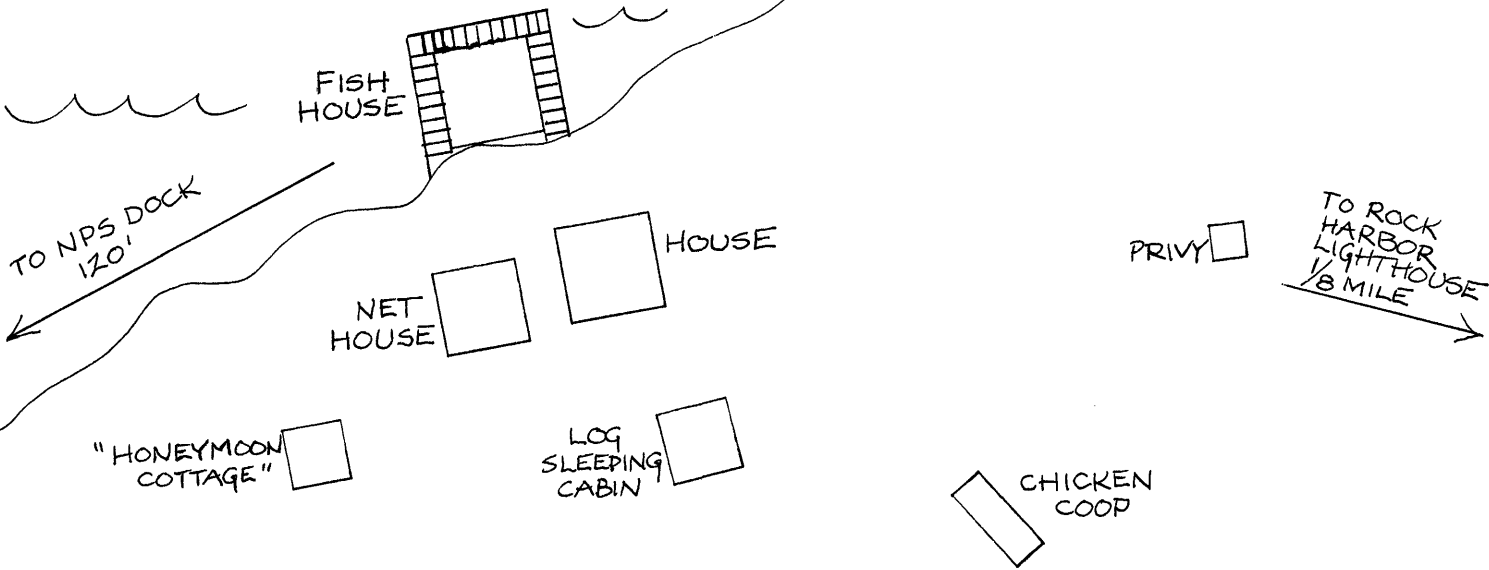
In 1905, Mike Johnson, Peter Edisen's father-in-law, purchased the fishery now known as the Edisen Fishery, which at that time consisted of the log cabin and net house, each built in 1895, and the main residence and fish house, both erected five years later. These buildings were all constructed by two local fishermen - a Mr. Mattson and Mr. Anderson. In 1916 Peter and Laura Edisen began fishing at the complex, sharing it with the Johnsons for a period. They lived in the net house until 1951 when it was converted back to its original use. The Johnsons and Edisens continued the practice of building according to their needs: a sleeping cabin and chicken coop were added to the complex in 1925 and 1934, respectively.

Peter Edisen has fished continually from this Rock Harbor complex since 1916, including several winters when the rest of the island was deserted of all other human habitation. Tourist steamers, first popular in the early twentieth century, carried the catch to the mainland, while in recent years, the fishery has supplied herring to the Rock Harbor Lodge. Visitors to the island can view a way of life important in Isle Royale history. The collection of buildings, erected according to function, and the surrounding nets and dryers, floats, barrels and boats all illustrate the development of commercial fishing at Isle Royale and the larger environment of Lake Superior from the early twentieth century.



SKETCH MAP NOT TO SCALE

ROCK HARBOR



EDISEN FISHERY  
ROCK HARBOR  
ISLE ROYALE  
NATIONAL PARK  
MICHIGAN