

Courtesy of Great Lakes Getaway, August 1994

*DINNER HERE HACKS IT— Hack-Ma-Tack Inn on the Cheboygan River is a choice destination for Northern Michigan boaters.*

Excerpts from:

## Mullett Lake: Port to the 7 seas

By Allan Hayes & Julie Candler

**The way to start** a trip around a beautiful lake is to have a cocktail party on its waters.

We begin our two-day visit to Mullett Lake by trolling quietly along in a 17-foot Boston Whaler. We are in the middle of the lake, and the sun would be casting its rosy glow over the yardarm, if we had a yardarm. This is a signal to sailors everywhere that it's time for the cocktail hour.

The calm water is ideal for powerboating, and the clear, fresh air adds a delectable flavor to our spread of Harvarti cheese and crackers, cheese nibbles and big chunks of fresh, healthy celery to cleanse the palate.

**Our plan this** evening is to cruise the length of Mullett Lake to dine at the Hack-Ma-Tack restaurant, at the mouth of the Cheboygan River.

Mullett Lake is about 10 statute miles south of Cheboygan. It is a key link in Michigan's unique and historic inland waterway which traverses the lower peninsula, from Cheboygan on Lake Huron almost to Lake Michigan at Little Traverse Bay. The Ottawa Indians used this passageway for centuries for travel and trade and to avoid the rough waters of the Straits of Mackinac.

Now the passage has two locks, at Alanson and Cheboygan.

**One of the nice** features of Mullett Lake is that it's a good jumping-off place to the rest of the world.

"Once you get through the Cheboygan lock and into Lake Huron, you're on the road to anyplace in the world you want to go, including Hawaii or the seven seas," says Mullett Lake resident Bill Matus.

**Except for a few** fishermen, the mid-week boat traffic is light as we enter the Cheboygan River and tie up at the 500-foot Hack-Ma-Tack dock. On a peak summer weekend, there is a parade of boats on these waters.

The Hack-Ma-Tack restaurant began life 100 years ago as a hunting and fishing lodge. Mike and Susan Redding, who have owned this three-story log structure for the past 14 years, tell us that 50 to 90 percent of their customers come by boat. Boaters often ask permission to spend the night tied up at the restaurant's dock. We see a small three-pontoon houseboat from a rental agency tied up there, with its occupants preparing to settle down for the night.

The decor in the Hack might be called interesting rustic. A big canoe hangs upside down over the dining room. Life-size wooden fish handsomely carved by Morten E. Fadum III decorate the log walls. Over the stone fireplace an Indian chief painted on deerskin looks sternly down at the bar.

**Dinner at the Hack**, as the natives call it, is a treasured tradition for locals and many visitors. The Hack-Ma-Tack serves its own spring water, and uses all pure vegetable oil in its cooking. Specially featured (“nationally famous”, says the menu) are the chief’s cut prime rib (\$29.95) and the baked whitefish Almondine (\$16.95).

Bill has the beef and the rest of us the whitefish, and two of us (who shall be nameless) finish off with the famous Hack-Ma-Tack ice cream pie—ice cream blended with creme de cocoa and creme de menthe on a homemade graham cracker crust.

The Hack is open from May 1 to Oct. 15. Call (616) 625-2919.