

Where in the World is . . . St. Paul Island

**Saint Paul Island(CY9)
CQ Zone 5 ITU Zone 9
IOTA NA-094**

St. Paul Island is a small uninhabited island located approximately 15 mi northeast of Cape Breton Island, Newfoundland in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It is at the northern end of the Appalachian Mountains; the highest point is 485 feet atop “Croggan Mountain.”

St. Paul Island is approximately three miles long by one mile wide at its widest point. It is extremely rugged with its shores being completely encircled by rockface cliffs.

The only land mammals inhabiting the island are rabbits, which were set loose after the lifesaving station was established in the late 1800's. The ramp and massive rowboat for 10 men were still there in 1950. An enormous house also used by the radio range station operators and families up to the 1950's. The remains of a WWII Royal Canadian Air Force radar station is also still there. It is also inhabited by numerous seabirds.

There are also two small lakes in the interior stocked with trout. Its ecosystem is considered fragile and due to the danger posed by visiting the island, visits must be cleared beforehand with the Canadian Coast Guard.

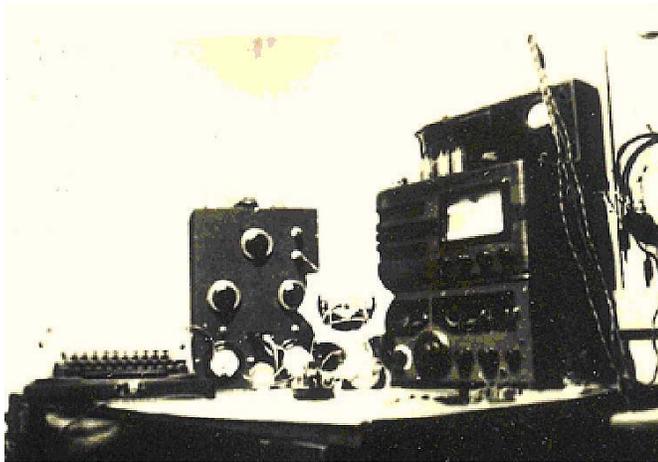


Figure 1 Radio gear used by VE1FT on St. Paul, Circa late 1930's

The island is nicknamed the “Graveyard of the Gulf” (of St. Lawrence) as it is fog-bound throughout much of the navigation season and posed a significant hazard during the Age of Sail.

A lighthouse was first established on the island in 1839. This lighthouse burned down in 1916. It was eventually replaced by an automated system in 1962.

With the light station now automated using solar power, the island sees few visitors, aside from Canadian Coast Guard helicopters on maintenance trips. The island used to host

a Marconi wireless station and it still sees occasional amateur radio operators who use the callsign prefix CY9. Other visitors include birdwatchers and SCUBA divers.

Expeditions to the island for amateur radio purposes take place in the summer months of July or August. The Coast Guard will no longer give permission to use the remaining buildings on the island, all in poor shape, so operation takes place from tents. Before July and after August the weather becomes too severe and unpredictable to permit a safe activation. The latest DXpedition, an American team plans to be on the island August 1 – 11, 2019 with call sign CY9C. The island is number 70 on the ClubLog DXCC Most Wanted List.



**St. Paul Island (KL)
CQ Zone 1 ITU Zone 1
NA-028**

On the opposite side of the continent from the Gulf of St. Lawrence lies the other St. Paul Island. Part of the Pribilof Islands group, off the coast of mainland Alaska, in the Bering Sea, The Siberian coast is roughly 500 miles northwest. About 77 square miles in total area, it is the largest of the group. St. Paul is mostly rocky and are covered with tundra and a population of 457 humans



The Pribilofs, were discovered in 1786 by Russian fur traders; no Alaskan natives are known to have lived on the island prior to this point. They named the larger island to the north St. Peter and the smaller St. Paul.

In 1788, the Russians forcibly relocated **Aleuts** from mainland Alaska to the Pribilofs to hunt **fur seals**; their descendants live on the two islands today. After the Civil War, the U.S. purchased Alaska from the Russian Empire for \$7.2 million. It became known as Seward's Folly, for the Secretary of State who brokered the deal. Others though, praised the move for weakening both the UK and Russia as rivals to American commercial expansion in the Pacific. Twenty years later, gold was discovered in Alaska.

In 1870-1910, the Alaska Commercial Company was awarded a sealing lease by the U.S. Government. By the end of that period, the fur seals had been severely over-harvested. The 1910 **Fur Seal Treaty** ended private sealing on the islands and placed the community and fur seals under the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries.



The climate of St. Paul is Arctic maritime. The Bering Sea location results in cool weather year-round and a narrow range of mean temperatures varying from 19 to 51 degrees fahrenheit. Average precipitation is 25 inches, with snowfall of 56 inches. Heavy fog is common during summer months.



So, what's to do on St. Paul Island? If you like birds, fish or seals, you are in luck. St. Paul is a port for the Central Bering Sea fishing fleet. Two seafood processing plants process cod, crab, halibut and other seafoods in St. Paul. Think, *Discovery Channel's, Deadliest Catch* reality show.

There is also a reindeer herd on the island. Residents subsist on halibut, fur seals, reindeer, marine invertebrates, plants and berries. Sounds, delicious.

Ham radio? Oh, I got so carried away, I forgot to mention that. Well, it is only 500 miles from the east coast of Russia. If you are working on your 5 Band DXCC, you can probably pick up some of that good DX you need for 80 and 40 meters. There is no recent record of any DXpeditions, to this St. Paul Island. In WWII, the Japanese threatened the island but even they sailed on past. St. Paul is so rare, that it does not even appear on ClubLog's Most Wanted DXCC list.

Reporting from the Dark Side,
Ron Litt, K5HM