



Isle La Motte is one of the world's richest sites for the study of geology. Its unique features include what has been called "the world's oldest reef" which underlies the southern third of the island. It was formed some 480 million years ago beneath a shallow tropical sea in the present location of Zimbabwe, with the Adirondacks to the west as an immense coastal range. Through the phenomena of plate tectonics, it shifted gradually to its present location.

The human history of Isle La Motte is intertwined with its geology. The oldest European settlement in Vermont, Fort St. Anne, built in 1666, used the limestone from the island's old "Fisk Quarry" for mortar. During the 19th Century, an economy based on farming and apple orchards also boasted five quarries which produced two kinds of stone, geologically known as Black River limestone and Chazy limestone (part of the ancient reef structure). The stone was shipped all over the country. The black limestone, marketed as black marble, was used in New York City's Radio City Music Hall (Radio Black) and the floor of the Vermont State House. Only one quarry on the island remains active today, but a number of buildings built with Isle La Motte "marble" still stand.

The loop begins at St. Anne's Shrine. The Shrine is the site of Fort St. Anne, built by the French in 1666, which currently operates as a religious shrine. A statue of Samuel de Champlain at the Shrine marks his landing on Isle La Motte. Cyclists are welcome to visit the peaceful grounds or swim at the Shrine's sandy beach. Food, public restrooms, picnic tables, and parking are available here.



Continuing south on West Shore Road, you will pass a public lake access with spectacular views of the Adirondack Mountains and the "Swamp," a large wetland that bisects the island. Four miles south of the Shrine is Fisk Farm. The Farm includes the ruins of a large stone house that burned in 1924 and the old icehouse, now a stone cottage. The buildings were originally built by Ichabod Ebenezer Fisk in 1787 with limestone and marble from the adjoining Fisk Quarry. The Fisks ran the quarry

throughout the 19th Century, employing 100 men at the height of operations. Vice President Teddy Roosevelt was visiting here when the news came that President McKinley had been shot. The frame house with porch was formerly a store and post office that served the quarry workers.

Next to the farm is Fisk Quarry, the oldest quarry in Vermont and part of the 480 million year old Chazy Reef structure. It was acquired by the Isle La Motte Reef Preservation Trust as a preserve in 1998. It took two million years for this reef to form. The oldest part is exposed in outcrops at the southern end of the island, the middle in the Fisk Quarry, and the youngest to the north of the Isle La Motte Historical Society Building. At the Fisk Quarry, you can see the famous stromatoporoids, ancient fossils which appear as white rounded shapes in the quarry walls. Help us preserve this ancient resource by not collecting artifacts and not trespassing at any sites

along the loop. As the road curves to the east, look left for the remains of another quarry in the underbrush. The oldest part of the Chazy reef is on the southern tip of the island along the shoreline; it consists of several different types of an organism called bryozoa. The youngest part, the Fisk-Goodsell Reef, is near the Isle La Motte Historical Society building; it consists of corals, bryozoans, stromatoporoids, brachiopods, and other ancient sea creatures.

Following the road, you will pass Hall's Apple Orchard, the last on the island. The Halls have run it since the early 1800s; note their house of ILM stone. Many varieties of apples are available at the roadside stand from mid-summer through the fall. Continuing on, you will pass Jensen's Farm, a dairy farm since 1926, and also one of the last on the island. Take a break from pedaling and listen for the bells on the Jersey cows.

Continuing north, you will pass the stone ILM Historical Society building, open to visitors on Saturday afternoons in July and August. You will also pass through the middle of the "Swamp" on your way to the village of Isle La Motte. At the four corners is the old Hill House built of ILM stone and formerly an inn. Turn left at the four corners and you will find the ILM Country Store. Buy sandwiches and picnic at a table by the pond. If you turn right at the four corners, you will see the beautiful old

stone Methodist Church. Continuing north on the main road through the village another stone building is the ILM Public Library. Notable also is McGuire's Family Furniture Makers where museum quality reproductions are made by hand. Turn left onto Shrine Road to return to St. Anne's Shrine. The Ezra Pike House, a stone house, is visible on the crest of the hill before you reach St. Anne's Shrine.

Miles	route directions
0.0	St. Anne's Shrine pavillion.
0.0	L onto Shrine Road/West Shore Road.
1.1	At fork stay to R onto West Shore Road
2.4	Public lake access.
3.7	Unpaved until the Main Road (1.3 miles).
5.0	Keep L on the Main Road (pavement resumes).
7.4	Village of Isle La Motte four corners.
9.0	L onto Shrine Road.
10.0	Bear L at the "Y" following paved road.
10.1	St. Anne's Shrine pavillion.

