

Cruising to Port Jefferson

by Capt. Gary P. Joyce

Bridgeport), make a turn to port at the aforementioned Stratford Shoal. Barring all that, follow the ferry in! Make sure — should conditions be foggy or you're entering at night — that you're dead on for the entrance buoys. Town is straight down the middle of the harbor ... and so is the ferry channel.

Gunkholing

Probably the most famous place to anchor up for some privacy is the Mount Misery Cove, also known as the Hurricane Hole, the Sand Hole, and a bunch of other names. It's on the northeast side of the harbor just after you enter. If you want to get away from it all, this is the place, plus it's almost perfectly protected by high dunes, except for the entrance, which is open to the west-southwest.

Good exploring — tide height and boat draft considered — can be had to the west of the harbor entrance. This will take you into the waterski-lake-like Conscience Bay. The run through The Narrows to the bay is fun as well. Conscience Bay is formed by the Crane Neck and Old Field on the northwest with Strongs Neck on the southeast. If you go back out into the harbor and round Strongs Neck, you'll enter Setauket Harbor, with the town of Setauket at the southern terminus (a dinghy ride in). In all of these, all but the channels into them are marked as mudflats, so these are places to investigate with your dink and a flooding tide. Watch your depths and know your tides (tides for this area can be found at www.mobile-geographics.com).

One other stop is outside Port Jefferson Harbor to the east, Mt. Sinai Harbor. There's not much to do there, but it's a picturesque area, has a long beach (Cedar Beach), good fishing (and diving), has an active sailing association (and a large frostbite crowd), Brookhaven town docks, a self-serve pump out, and three marinas: (north to south) Ralph's Fishing Station (631-473-6655; VHF 67; moorings with tender service and some transient docks along with a snack bar), Mt. Sinai Yacht Club (631-929-8120; www.msyc.org; some transient docks) and Old Man's Boat Yard (631-473-7330; some transient docks). It's definitely worth a day trip.

Moorings and Marinas

The entire harbor has boats moored everywhere, but

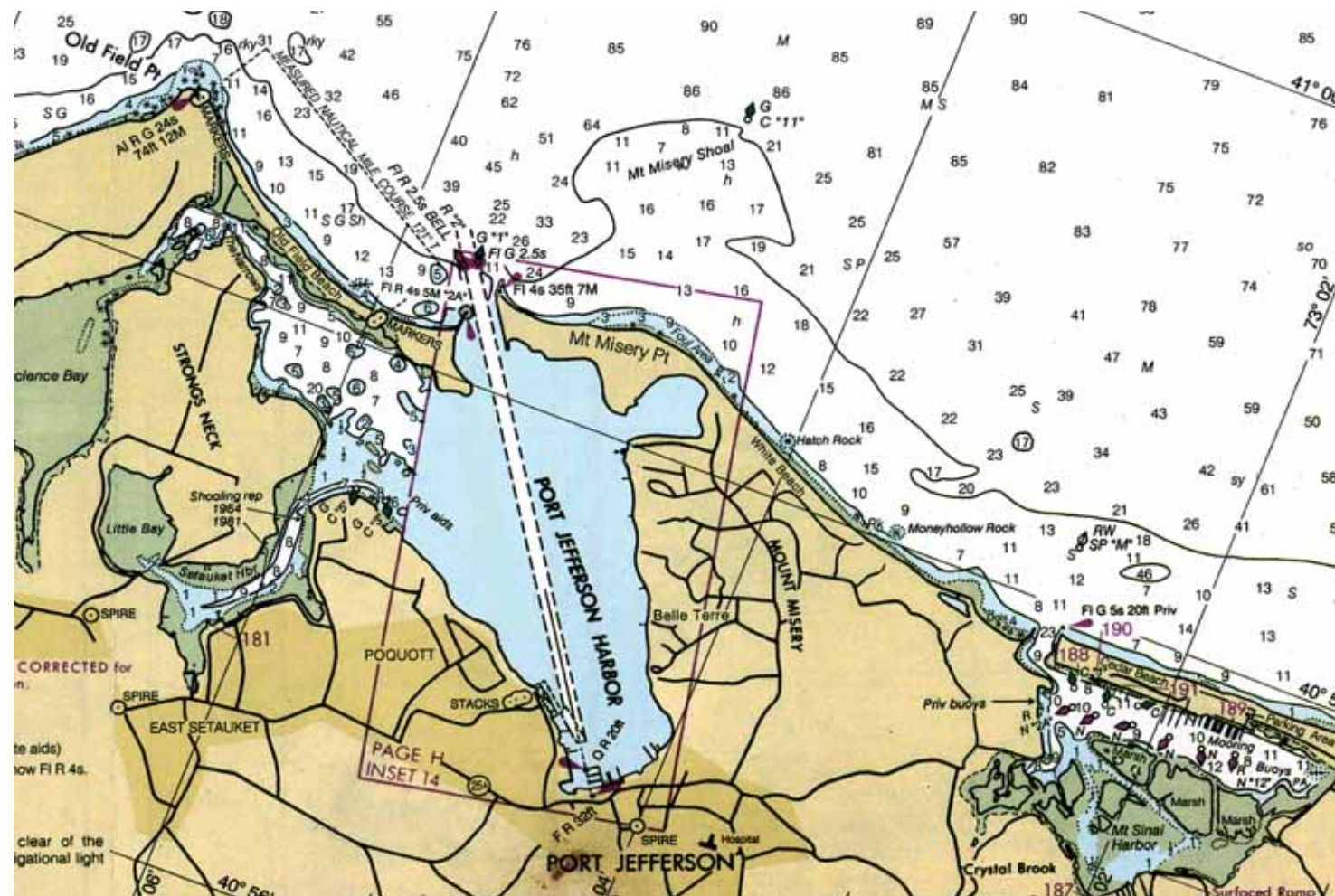


Aerial view of Port Jefferson.

the biggest concentration of moorings and docks available to cruisers is at the southern terminus of this two mile long embayment.

The Port Jefferson Town Marina (631-331-3567) usually has around eight to 10 slips and the same number of moorings available to transient boaters; they can also hook you up with repair facilities and service. It's located to the west of the ferry terminal.

Danford's Marina and Inn (631-928-5200) sports around 75 slips for clientele with transient dockage available as well. This is a top-shelf resort/spa/dining experience with excellent service that extends to the marina, which is located on the east side of the ferry terminal.



The Setauket Yacht Club (631-473-9650, east side of the harbor) often has transient moorings for cruisers, but is usually restricted to reciprocal mooring to other yacht club members; it's worth asking, nonetheless.

A number you'll need if you're mooring out is the Port Jefferson Launch: 631-796-4452; VHF 68.

What to Do — Water

There's plenty of good fishing in this area. You'll do okay in the northern reaches of the harbor, but right outside the harbor mouth to the east in Mount Misery Shoal and up close to the beach are some erratics (as the geologists call them ... you can call them big rocks). Word of caution: if you're fishing in tight, you'd better know where you're going and what you're doing.

North is the Stratford Shoal, east is Oldfield and Cranes Neck Points, all excellent fishing spots (and, naturally, very rocky). There are also some nice big rocks between Old Field Point and the green 11A buoy.

There are some serious water-skiers/wakeboarders in the Conscience Bay area ... the tides are problematic there, but the wind rarely is.

If you're an experienced diver, Old Field Point makes for a good dive ... you'll find lots of anchors (Danforth style) wedged in the rocks, and if you night dive here, there are plenty of blackfish hiding under the rocks. It used to be good lobstering as well, but I haven't dived there in over a decade, so I can't vouch for that anymore. The current at the point is problematic, so I wouldn't recommend the area for novice divers, day or night.

There's also good diving/spearfishing on the west jetty of Mt. Sinai Harbor. The east jetty will provide a diver with literally a season's worth of lost fishing gear (and enough lead to cast a keel for a 12 meter) and a weird variety of other odds and ends (I've

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