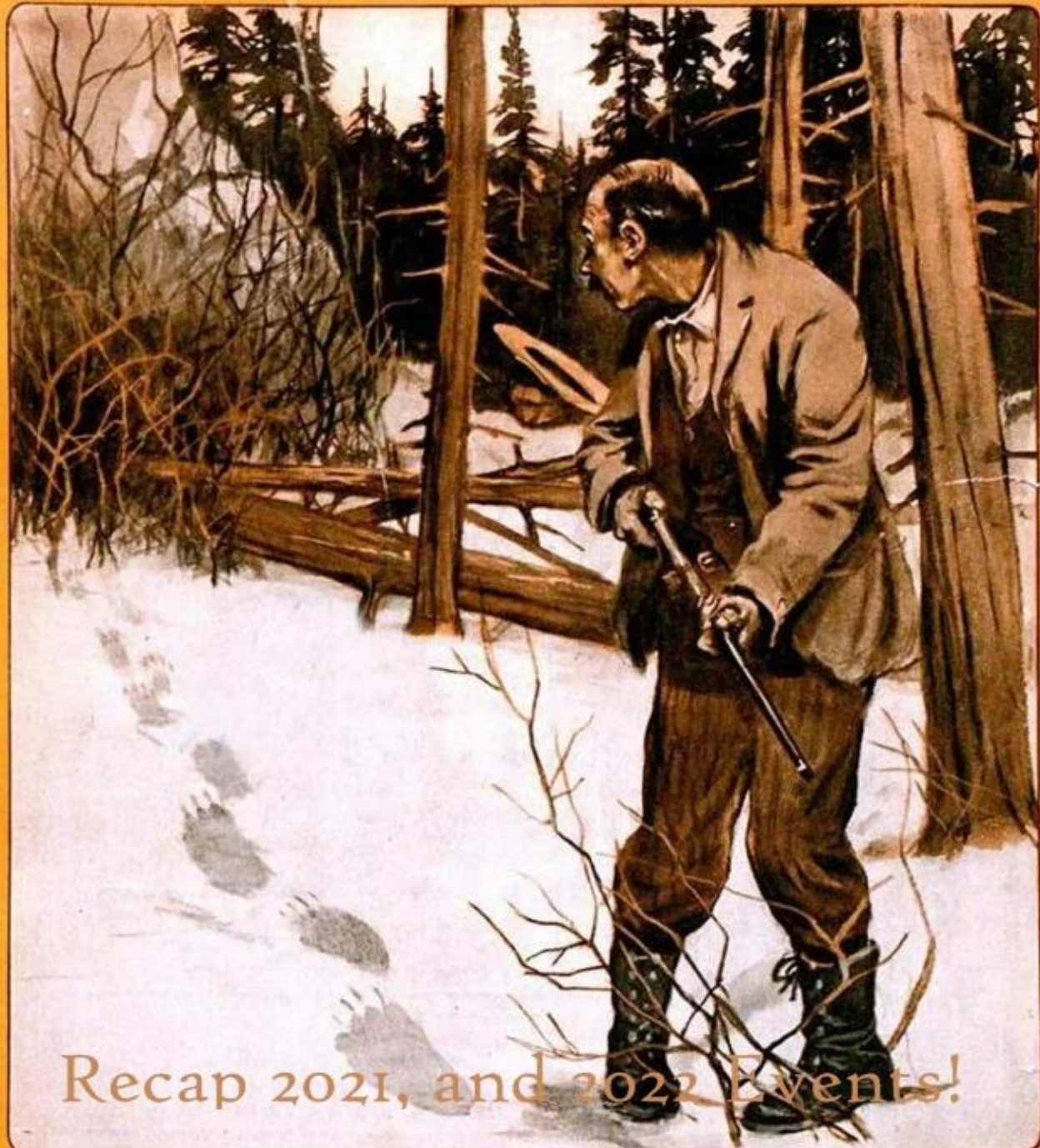


# VOYAGERS

Winter  
2021-22

CANOE TRIPS Newsletter



Recap 2021, and 2022 Events!



## SALUT,

Welcome to another Voyagers Newsletter, are you aware this is our tenth year? Time certainly does fly by, doesn't it? Ok, so here we are in the middle of the 20-22 winter, and it had been a cold one for sure, aren't we blessed to have it? Since freeze up our band of troopers have been busy tromping through the bush and doing some scouting, as well as several hunting forays in to the big pineries. Our goal in 2022 is to host our spring and fall events as well as our Father Daughter trip in September. There will be more about this in this issue – see **dates on page 24**.

## 2021 RECAP

Last year was great. The Voyagers were able to complete all of the planned events, and our turnout was equally great! As you may recall, we started out in 2021 with our Fly-Fishing Trip, hosted by Mr. Jay Allen. That trip was covered in our Summer Newsletter/Travelogue, and if you'd like to read through it, please go to our website [HERE](#).

We then moved into September, and our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Father/Daughter Canoe Trip on the Au Sable River. This event went perfectly, and the weather was in our favor all of the way, it was beautiful!

## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL FATHER/DAUGHTER CANOE TRIP



The morning of the event, a Friday, we all gathered in Hastings, enjoyed breakfast, exchanging pleasantries before piling into the trucks for the three plus hour trip into the North country. Our trip would this year was on the Au Sable River, down from the put in at Five Channels Dam, just off M-65. This year we planned a paddle across Cooke Pond, to a campsite on National Forest land, some two plus miles downriver. This site was positioned along the north shore of the Au Sable, on a point overlooking the high bluffs so characteristic of the Au Sable valley.





What a neat feeling it is to have my two daughters along with me for a trip down my favorite Michigan River. I know the others were thinking along the same lines, and you know, we're glad we have the opportunity to pull the plug and put something like this into action.

Note: The Father Daughter Canoe Trips are designed differently than those conventional Voyagers trips. Archery, Target shooting and axe throwing are all a part of the venue. If you would like to fly fish, that is headed our way as well. We are all about getting the youth out into the out of doors to experience adventure in all sorts of ways.

If you have a thought, or idea, please write to us. We would enjoy hearing from you.



The weather was perfect, and the sun was bright over a wonderful blue sky. The color wasn't yet in full swing, but we could see the beginning of fall.

The group totaled 13, with five dads, and the rest a troop of wonderful ladies aged eight years to twenty-three! It was terrific to see them together. Like family, everyone worked together.





The teams paired up – two by two. As we unloaded there on the bank, the gear, we experienced a mild case of mis-fusion in attempting to get the lunch gear and canoes coordinated – no one ever said it would be easy! But alas, we were able to load the canoes, get everyone fed and slide the canoes into the water downbound! Here we go!



As we paddled down river across the flat open water of Cooke Pond, it was easy to see this was going to be a good time.



Now Cooke Pond is actually just an impoundment between dams on the Au Sable River. The Five Channels Dam is above, and the Cooke Dam below. Both dams were a part of a six dam project beginning in 1912. This was after the timber of the region had been cut, piled and floated down the Au Sable to the mills that lined her banks until the twentieth century. The river is well suited for hydro-electric power, and those plants built look exactly as they did when they were built now more than 110 years ago.

Equally interesting is the stories that go along with the power plants. It was the brainchild of the Foote brothers out of Jackson, Michigan who conceived and built what would later become Consumers Power. During construction, the company hired workers, who would bring their entire families to the project. The company built forty-five-acre camps complete with water and sewer systems, icehouses, schools, stores, and boardinghouses. Workers received land on which to build a house as well and can still be seen today along the banks. Truly an interesting piece of Michigan history.

While I am glad to enjoy what was created, and equally grateful for the power generated here, it is also disappointing to know that the mighty Au Sable River would be even mightier if the dams were removed. You see this stretch of water, from Loud Dam to just above Foote Dam. This portion of the river is essentially the most dramatic high-gradient reaches of the mainstem Au Sable valley segment, where the mainstem cuts through end moraines on its descent to Lake Huron – with rapids that would easily exceed 12' to the mile. This means the last thirty miles of the Au Sable would be some of the wildest in the entire state – certainly in the lower peninsula!

Dams and their ponds have eliminated most of the best rapids on this portion of the river. The dams also prevent fish from migrating between Lake Huron and nearly the entire Au Sable River, which formerly hosted the Grayling and the Sturgeon.



The Paddles were placed aside as our retinue approached the camp site. The little peninsula jutting out into the sparkling dark blue water – we beached our craft and came ashore like Jean Nicolet, and immediately began to set up camp.

The girls launched an exploration of the surrounding area and get firewood. As we began getting the camp established, including sleeping quarters for men and ladies, the first wave of girls returned carrying some firewood – a lot of firewood! Here came about seven of those young ladies carrying a twenty foot log out of the woods, and it was plenty good for burning too! We all cheered and set about cutting the log up for the night fire.





As we moved into the evening hours, dinner was prepared for the troops in Voyagers traditional fashion. The ladies requested brats, so we accommodated by selecting some pretty great flavors, including Elk.

The meal was accompanied by vegetables, fruit & nuts. As we all sat around the fire eating it was clear to see that all were enjoying the fare. In this setting, a father with his daughter(s), who would not enjoy it? We are blessed to enjoy such an event together, which strengthens the bond between the group of young ladies also.



The began to set that night, and our group gathered around the fire and talked together.

Keeping our focus on light heartedness, the group shared stories, and words of encouragement, which included some pretty great words of wisdom from our ladies.

Speaking as a father of two wonderful ladies, this trip, united with other dads and their daughters is a working example of just how good gathering together can be.

It is a time to relax, enjoy the outdoors as well as get in some healthy competition, which did!

This group of young ladies are destined for great things – mark these words carefully, and it is truly wonderful to be a part of their progress!



Competitive events this year included shooting competitions and axe throwing. The group was divided into two teams, led by Tom Keena, who also supplied the Air Rifles for the event, and donated them to the Voyagers. The targets were set up, rules established and range guides in place. Let the competition begin – and boy did it!! The shooting was exceptional, even among the less experienced shooters – and of course all were enjoying the shots!

The winning team were awarded YETI cups with the Voyagers Logo on them, which were done by the Keena family, thank you Tom & Jeanne!!

There have always been plenty of folks who move to support the Voyagers events – thank you all for your contributions!!



What a day for a paddle – Mid September, warm air and mild breeze – this is the perfect paddle for fall.

I arose about 5 am and banked the ol' stove [for coffee] and campfire, which was still glowing from the previous night's fire. As I stood there in the darkness, listening to the coffee pot begin to 'tink', a barred owl made his familiar hoot far off in the distance.

I had heard him a few times during the night, as well as a chorus of coyotes. Now they began to fade as the morning sun drew nearer on the eastern horizon.

The coffee was beginning to percolate as a few campers mustered out of their sleeping quarters. The ladies all stayed in one large tent, and the men slept under the stars along the bank. The fire was crackling now and doing a good job of soaking up firewood. Hot cocoa and coffee were served to those who wanted to sit around the fire light and sip something warm.





Mornings around a nice warm fire are always enjoyed by campers. When the wood isn't punky or too pungent anyways, and here this morning it wasn't. We had a nice supply of oak, beech and some pine.

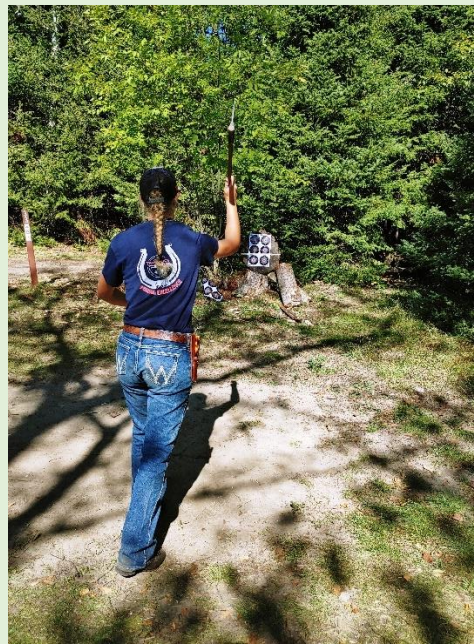
The morning air always fluctuates. When I arose before daylight, you could almost get by in a T shirt, but by sunup, the damp cool air is pushed down by convection, and it gets a bit chilly in camp – break out the woolies!! And sure enough, we saw em too!

Those ladies donned their sweaters, and had some blankets wrapped around them as they sat and confabbed together before breakfast... the fog rolling in ever so slowly.











The Axe Throwing competition was a bunch of fun! Who knew that each of the ladies would make their mark here? We all found out just how adept they are in this competition!

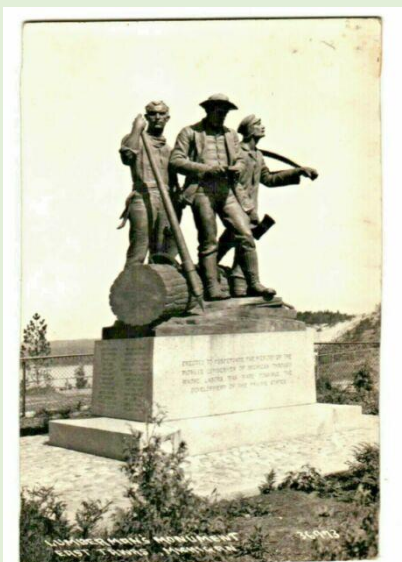
It's a no brainer, the hawk throwing will be a regular event on the Father/Daughter trip – as well as the target shooting competitions. Very sportsmanlike behavior was found to be in play at all times, and their ability to listen, act and serve one another during the competitions is also noteworthy. We look forward to seeing more of this in 2022!



The day ended with a stop by the Lumberman's Monument. This monument was erected in 1931 as a lasting memorial to the lumbermen who cut Michigan's massive pine forests between 1850 and 1910. This event, known as the lumber era of the Great Lakes may have leveled the many stands of two-hundred-foot white pine, but here today, many of them are returning!

As you see in the picture left, the pine forests have returned. The big white pines are now beginning to rise above the other trees of the forest all across the state, and what an amazing sight that is. Gone are the Timber cruisers, the sawyers, the skidders & jammers or pikemen, who rode the log drives down river... but we have their -

Memory yet. Each time I come up to the Au Sable, I try to visit one or more of the remaining sites that recall the lumber era. Much has changed, yes, much has. And we can hardly recognize some of the pictures we look at today, like the one below, which was taken just after the monument was placed on the high rollway behind it.



Be sure to notice the lack of tall timber back then. This was a time when we recalled with fondness the adventures our country was known for, and in spite of some of the negatives we may see today, it is only through hindsight, and ought not to corrupt what was done historically or detract from what it allowed or created.

Remember this, conservation is our duty, but it should never eliminate our ability to use what the earth provides for us.

Looking at this trip, I consider our Nation safe, especially in the hands of the young ladies we spent the trip with. What an amazing group – and what an amazing group of Dads. The changes that need to be made in the USA today have a chance. The character we see in many of our youth today offer us hope for what may be unseen. The girls also show their faith in a way that is very tasteful, and respectable.



**AU SABLE RIVER – FATHER / DAUGHTER CANOE TRIP FALL 2021 [DAD'S]**





REMEMBER TO RSVP FOR THE 2022 TRIP – SEE DATES BELOW:

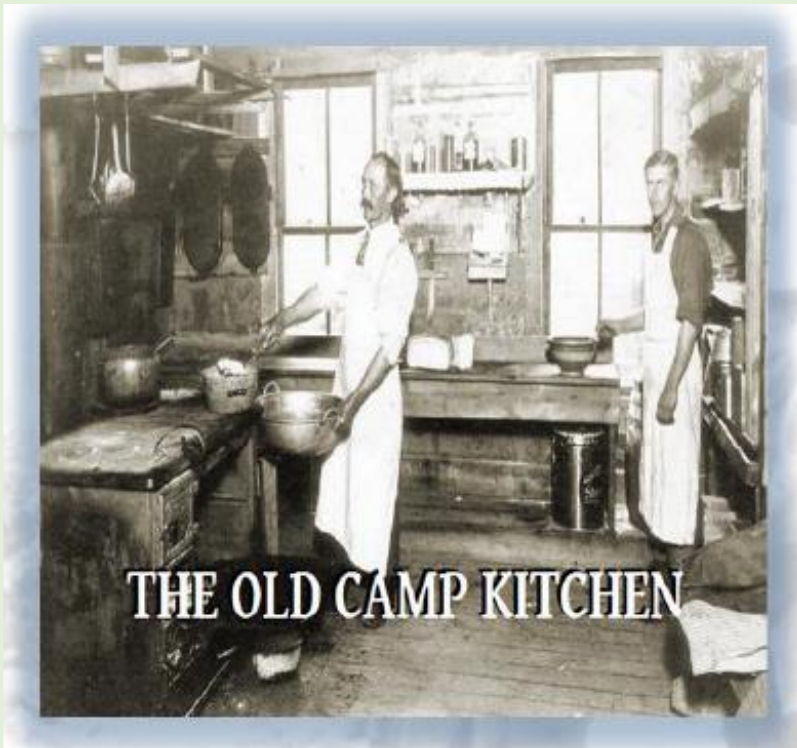
# FATHER / DAUGHTER Canoe Trip SEPTEMBER 23RD > 25TH 2022



Down the beautiful  
Au Sable River

H. S. WATSON





## 'TINKERS FLANNEL CAKES'

1 ¾ cups	Flour
2 teaspoons	Baking Powder
½ teaspoon	Baking Soda
½ teaspoon	Salt
2 tablespoons	Sugar
3	Eggs
1 ½ cups	Buttermilk
¼ cup	Melted Salted Butter

### Directions

1. Sift flour with baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar. Beat eggs until thick and foamy. Stir in buttermilk and melted butter into the eggs.
2. Stir in dry ingredients until mixture is just blended. Batter will be lumpy – whooo-eee!
3. Pour batter onto a small circle of Corn Oil, Fry cakes on a hot griddle

If you are travelling North this year, or in the future, and wish to sample some great food or great ambiance, then consider a few of the following places:

- Red Wood Steakhouse – Lewiston, Michigan
- Rapid River Lumber Camp – Rapid River, Michigan
- Bear Track Inn – Drummond Island, Michigan

We enjoy travelling from time to time for a great meal. Maybe you do the same. Consider the road less travelled this year, and get off the interstate for some travel down the old two lanes – you never know what you'll find.



## WHY ATTEND A VOYAGERS CANOE TRIP?

- Adventure
- Competitions
- Axe & Knife Throwing
- Canoe Races
- Rope Bridge Building
- Woods Tromps
- Fishing
- Leadership
- Spiritual Encouragement

There are many reasons to [RSVP today](#). Take a step back in time to enjoy camping the way it was done 100 years ago, you will not be sorry.





# Meet The Voyagers Sponsors

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FIRST FOR HUNTERS

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**The Bursley's**

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**The Boerema's**

**The Wood's**  
**The Roth's**  
**The Bartz's**  
**The Cantu's**

**Thank You!**

Since 2012, our sponsors have contributed immensely in making possible our wilderness canoe trips. Without them, efforts to get our youths out of doors, and into the wild could not been done. Today, we continue to strive towards our goal of encouraging today's young people! Voyagers Canoe Trips seek to offer an experience worth remembering, and doing so through leadership, encouragement & character.

Thank You!

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT



There are 133 primary rivers in the state of Michigan. A good percentage of those rivers can be paddled, with some difficulty – others are shallow or blockaded by countless deadfalls. Regardless, my personal goal is to see how many of those 133 I can paddle before I am too old to sit in a canoe. My canoe mentor, Craig Wood, now 85 years of age spent 40 plus years paddling the wilderness rivers of the forgotten north. He shared with me the benefit he received from that experience, and it is self-reliance. This is to those of you out there looking for an experience worth remembering.



Before you jump into what everyone else is doing, consider what value it will be twenty years from now. Ask yourself if you'll be content, or if you'll have questions about adventures you could have had – if only... Do not wait. Take time today to imagine what you really want out of life and go after it! Following your true desires of the heart will lead to you becoming more self-reliant, smart and able to stand firm on issues of importance. That is worth consideration.

## VOYAGERS FALL 2022 CANOE TRIP



Our annual fall canoe trip started as they all do with the whole gang congregating at Hastings Michigan. Beginning at 6:15 or so, we get breakfast going and the girls do their best to get everyone fed before we depart. The reason for this is because the drive up in almost always greater than 3.5 hours, which gets us into the noon hour, and that is the next time food appears – our lunch. For some, that three to four hours can seem like a life sentence – so it is protocol to get them fed before we roll. And do you know what, those ladies who volunteer do a great job, and really help out in getting everyone signed in, gear checked and packed. In the photo above, Londa and Frank confab in the moments leading up to our picture being taken as a group.

As we checked the last attendees in, loaded their gear and wrapped up breakfast – it was time to say a prayer, and get those trucks pointed north. We had one attendee joining our group from Mt. Pleasant, and Mr. Darius Jerue said he would drive separate, and pick him up on the way north. So, that is what we planned. I sent them directions,



coordinates and the name of the dam where we would be putting in. I will not go into the rest of the story, to protect the names of the innocent, but let it be said – we did some waiting at a dam opposite of another dam, some others detoured to instead... HA! We all had a pretty good laugh, and of course, no one is going to live that down, especially when those in question listened to GPS versus an actual person. But anyway, I'm sure that'll never ever happen again – fluke.

The weather was sunny and really decent! We carried the canoe down to the water, loading them as we set them into the water. The current looked as though it was moving pretty fast as there had been rain in the days leading up to the trip. The Au Sable, which means Sandy River, is one of Michigan's fastest draining rivers.





As we set off for camp 1, we talked about measuring the speed of the current by timing ourselves between the launch and Bobcat Creek. In the time it took for us to paddle that stretch, we found the current to be moving about 5+ mph. A good sign that we'd make camp long before dusk.



Setting off, hearing that paddle push back the water and feeling your canoe speed towards the main current is one of the best feelings, especially when you're overdue for a paddle up north. All around us were our familiar friends such as the Herons, Kingfishers and the occasional Towhees, Brown Thrashers, Ovenbirds, Hermit and Wood Thrushes! The smell of fall was in the air too.

The partly sunny skies let in just enough sunlight to warm your back periodically, or at least until we were hidden behind the dense conifer stands that line the river. The river was called Riviere aux Sable by the early French voyageurs and its earliest mention in history dates back to the early 1700's. Paddling along this ancient waterway, it is difficult to avoid thinking about the amazing stories it could tell us. From the Blockhouse at Blockhouse Creek to the remaining lumber camps or mill ruins, this river is literally packed with interesting features – all of its branches.





This stretch of the Au Sable is fairly swift and has some of the best scenery on the entire river. The current continues like this until you reach The South Branch River, which is just below our 1<sup>st</sup> camp.

We lost the sun after about thirty minutes, but it was still very decent, and there were really no threats of rain. We wondered about a possible sprinkle, which is always possible in this region, as passing showers are not uncommon.

It was great to be paddling with the gang again! Looking up ahead, Andy in the lead, Carl, Frank and the rest, it was a good feeling to be surrounded by a man's friends.







Moving past Thompsons Landing, I called ahead to notify the lead that our camp was No. 17, located on the north bank. Some of the camps through this section of river are fairly difficult to see until you're right on them, so knowing mile/time markers is important – keep those eyes peeled, and you'll avoid the ugly task of paddling 'up-river' – of which we all enjoy – said no one – ever.

Suddenly, there it was – the jewel of the North bank... and rising out of the giant white pines was a rainbow and a unicorn was running along the bank...well, the camp wasn't that great, but it was pretty good! In fact, we were in amongst the Big Pines – and the surrounding forest was dark – going to be a goodun! Getting up the bank was a chore, but we needed a challenge to get our stomachs ready for the night's meal.

E



Like sprinters – camp was set up quick, and the Ol' camp kitchen was ready to spit out some of those legendary meals... at the helm of this kitchen affair was our man Darius, who has been stepping it up in the Camp Cook department. Here in the photo left, Darius working an Army P38 can opener – check out the grimace.... whoa - heavy.

In any regard, the meal got under way. Elsewhere amongst the camp – men were busy collecting firewood and setting up our sleeping area, which was commanded a good view of the river. The camp was busy for the next thirty minutes. All around us we could smell coffee pot steam, the aroma of brisket and the smoke of the piney wood – who could beat it?

As dinner was prepared, we said grace, and the men



Stood single file, waiting for their plate and portion. The only sound we could audibly hear was the growling of stomachs.



Saturday morning, we arose early and moved quickly into breakfast, before reloading the canoes for camp 2, which was down river about 11 miles – across Loud Pond and Five Channels Pond – which included two portages. Indeed, this was a first ever for our Voyagers clan, which we planned in order to change up our usual structure – and all will agree, we did just that. The introduction of ‘flat’ water is nearly always like a life sentence, especially after speeding along at 5 mph. We dubbed this trip the ‘meat grinder’ as it was certainly a challenge – but of course, what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger. However, challenging the trip was, the river valley had some great fall scenery throughout.





We stopped at the Rollways, which during the logging era, the rim was used as a massive banking ground, where they piled the logs during the winter months. Below is an example of the rollways.



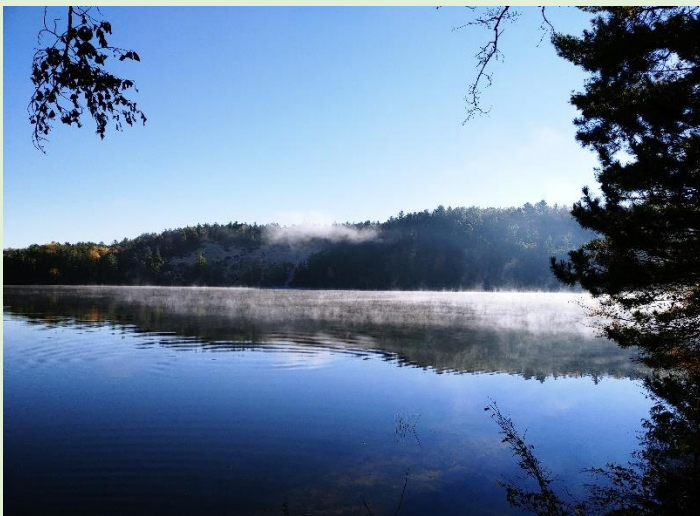
The paddle across the ponds [Back water of the dam impoundments] can be difficult if paddling against the wind. In our case, we had a side wind, but it wasn't too bad – just a good deal of flat water – but as you may note, very picturesque.

The Au Sable through this stretch has many things to look at, and the slower pace allows for more attention to details one might find tucked away along the banks of the river. There are islands, fish, eagles and plenty of small bays to paddle into or small tributaries that are fed by springs and streams feeding the river.

Other great things to look for are the many beaver lodges, muskrat lodges or loads of wildlife critters. My favorites are the Kingfisher and the Canvas Back. Below are a few examples interesting finds.







## ISLAND CAMP

As the afternoon sun began to settle in the west, our contingent of canoes paddled into a small harbor of big island in the middle of Cooke Pond. There was a small portage to camp and the whole entourage was plenty tired. The primarily hardwood island was about 15 acres in size with a high north end. We scouted the island, finding an acceptable amount of firewood for the night, though some of it was wet from rain in the previous days. That is one of the possible setbacks – when things get wet, it can impact the warmth we find in a nice campfire.

This was the last night on the river, and in the morning, we would be paddling back to the mainland. While dinner was prepared, the hushed tones of the camp reflected just how bushed we all were. It was only about 12 miles, but the paddle strokes were four times that of our conventional trips...portages, hooey! Now there was the sizzling of the stove, the smell of dinner being prepared and the thick smoke rising from our half wet, half green wood fire... but as we've said before, this is a moment we would not trade for anything. All around us is the river, and then men gather around the fire and talk with one another, sharing stories and laughing. Times like this will almost certainly keep us company when we become too old to paddle our own canoe.

It wasn't quite none o'clock before some of the group headed off to bed. A few of us launched a foray to the north end of the island to look out over the water – gaze at the stars and give call some coyotes!



Sunday morning would prove to be sunny, but the morning fog was amazingly thick, forcing us to wait for it to lift before setting out. Breakfast was made on the fly so-to-speak, but it was plenty good, and all ate their fill. Thank you, Darius, and all those who worked to make camp run smoothly!

As we slid the canoes into the cool morning water, we glanced back to the landing and bid a fine farewell to the island camp. We paddled along the shore, and the high rollways along the original river course [south side] and rounded the bend to sawdust point. Here was the takeout.

Loading up the canoes, we then rallied the group, broke out lunch and began the review for the Cruiser Axe. Each attendee casts their vote for who they thought reflected Character-Relationship-Task. It was a tough a trip, and there were some big challenges, so we knew this would be one for the books. In the end, Mr. Ethan Ackerman.



The cruiser axe is made for each trip of the Voyagers. This is a 2.5 LB double bit axe made for packing light – perfect for canoe forays or camp/hiking trips. The process is to rehabilitate an existing axe, usually 75 years or older, and make a new handle and sheath custom. Each cruiser is unique. Ethan, we trust you will enjoy the Cruiser Axe, and may it serve you well on each adventure. Remember the cruiser is a self-sufficient man, capable of handling himself in uncertain situations. The cruiser could chart, map & survey his course through the big pineries. What a metaphor for life. Be encouraged Mr. Ackerman!

## VOYAGERS 2022 SCHEDULES

- **SPRING CANOE TRIP**                      **April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Father / Daughter TRIP**              **September 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>**
- **FALL CANOE TRIP**                        **October (Date TBD)**

**RSVP NOW ONLINE BY CLICKING [HERE](#). Or Call or Text 269-838-6410**



# **Carl Howard, the man in the bow saying Au revoir!**

