



VOYAGERS CANOE TRIPS

Fall 2025

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Fall Trip - October 24th - 26

- **FALL CANOE TRIP** **October 24th > 26th**
- **SPRING CANOE/FLY FISHING TRIP** **May 1st > 3rd 2026**

SPONSORSHIP & WHY THE PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT

Each year our sponsors contribute to the Voyagers Canoe Trip program, making each trip possible. We are incredibly thankful for this sponsorship, but are each of you aware of the why behind each contribution?

For ten years now, the Voyagers Canoe Trip program has focused on getting our youth out into the wild country surrounding our rivers, instilling in each of them the values essential for leading a productive and virtuous life. There is something inspiring about a river in the backcountry. The environment, somewhat primeval, allows us to open up, and drop our defensive barriers. This allows for a more receptive behavior, so that when we teach leadership exercises, orienteering, bushcraft, and target practice, with throwing hawks [axes], lessons, along with the use of pithy maxims influence positive instruction while in camp. What is a 'Pithy Maxim'? It is an expression of a general principle or rule. A precept; and succinct statement or observation of a rule of conduct or moral teaching.

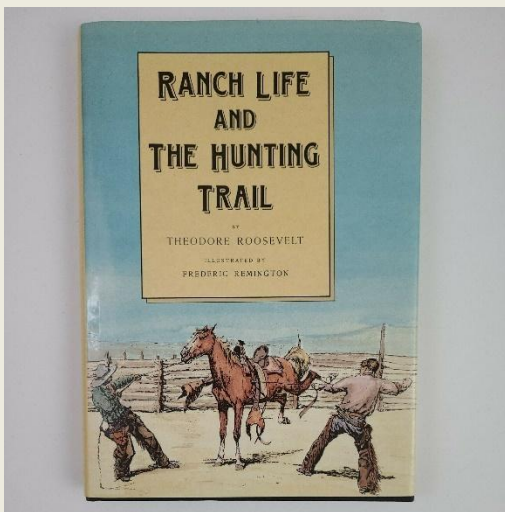
Maxims are what many of older men grew up hearing. Perhaps you recall hearing them. Examples are: *We cannot change yesterday. We can only make the most of today and look with hope toward tomorrow.* Or, *Competition breeds cooperation.* Other maxims we commonly use may be: *The twenty minutes spent complaining about the work, could be the twenty the job was done sooner.*

Some of you may recall my fondness of Theodore Roosevelt and my appreciation for many of those books he wrote. His story, like many of us, began with many challenges. If you care to read about his early life, you may see just how many he had. But in spite of this, the man set out to face his fears.

"There were all kinds of things of which I was afraid at first, ranging from grizzly bears to "mean" horses and gun fighters; but by acting as if I was not afraid I gradually ceased to be afraid." TR.



Theodore Roosevelt led many adventures and wrote about them. The excerpt above, from 'Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail' illustrates how practical experience, and a willingness to learn allowed him to grow and become a positive influence on family, friends, and our country.



Many of our youth attendees lack a great deal of experience in the outdoors some certainly more than others, but they all have a chance to learn and experience a rugged new approach to adventure through sleeping out on the ground, with no tents and literally camping as TR did back in the 1880s. They also experience the benefit of solitude and sharing something about themselves around the campfire, which historically leads to a bond being created within the group.

Why all of this is important to you, is found in the fact that when our youths receive positive influence, they are much more likely to go on to do things that benefit others. Whether it is conservation, or being a better student, future husband, or even a businessman, we all can see the value.

Each trip involves the guides working in advance to develop a trip that allows for plenty of opportunities to plant seeds of wisdom, so each youth goes home pondering them, possibly for future use – later in life. Today in our country, there is a growing need to illustrate the far-reaching values

of moral character. Teaching doesn't have to be a lecture either. It begins with simply living intentionally and sharing the basis for making sound decisions that will ultimately impact the world around us.

Our sponsors see this. They understand the investment in our youth as something worth doing. The return on this investment is the security of the things we love in America. Our millions of acres of state or federally owned lands, our rivers and streams – lakes and oceans, all surrounding our homes and families. Conservation is more than just protecting our out-of-doors, it is the pursuit of ensuring men and women – the American citizen is properly educated, so they may lead healthy productive lives which ultimately ensures our future.

Thank You, Sponsors!



Earning Your Voyagers Badge!

Three trips with the Voyagers earn you a custom-made badge.



Each badge is made with your name, the year it was earned, and tooled uniquely for each individual! The pin is brass and allows the badge to be pinned onto your Toque (Knit hat) or pack. The badge also is stamped with the words – **PER ARDUA & LOYALTY**. What does this mean? Per Ardua is an old Gaelic word for 'Through Difficulties', followed by Loyalty, meaning when times get tough, who will you be loyal to?

As many of you know, we profess faith in Jesus Christ. We know that this is a personal choice, and that choice will always be under fire, challenging each of us daily. Will we follow the ways of the world, or will we choose to take the high road, and live a life of character? The choice is ultimately yours to make, but we trust the badge each youth earns will play a role in living a life worth living, later allowing a story to be told that reflects the life of a good man.

We believe this is of value that you will value!



Camp along the Au Sable River 2022.

[RSVP NOW BY CLICKING HERE](#)

VOYAGERS CRUISER AXE AWARD

Hand Made, Originals Earned Through Leadership Qualities

What is a Cruiser Axe? A 'Cruiser' or 'Saddle' Axe is a 2.5 double bit axe used by packers, surveyors, or those headed into the backcountry, needing to pack light. Weight means everything when planning an expedition into the backcountry, and the cruiser fits the need well. This form of axe, now fallen into relative obscurity was once the item of choice for the cruiser. The cruiser worked for large timber buyers or lumber firms seeking to purchase and cut select timber. The hired cruiser headed into forest land to estimate the volume of marketable timber and collect data concerning forest conditions for appraisal, sales, administration, logging, land use, and forest management planning. This would include where railroads might be built, logging roads or banking grounds along rivers, what we now know as rollways. This rugged individual had to be a confident self-starter who possessed the skills necessary for survival – especially due to the fact their work would be done sometimes hundreds of miles from any civilization.

Voyager's leadership created the Cruiser Award to instill and encourage our young men to consider this type of character, and adopt those same resilient qualities – becoming more and more self-sufficient.



Each Voyagers Cruiser Axe starts with an old and corroded double-bit axe head. Only vintage originals if possible, most of which were made in forges of lumber camps dating back one hundred years. We then select a piece of Ash or Hickory, straight-grained, and hard as iron. Then we work to shape and re-work the handle until it is smooth. We then heat the handle. While it is still hot, a Dark Walnut stain is added to finish the exterior.

Each Axe is engraved with the words PER ARDUA, which means through difficulties – the Voyagers motto. Finally, a handmade sheath is crafted from leather.

The Cruiser Axe is then awarded to one worthy young man – will that be you? Check out our [Team Competition page](#) for more on how you might be selected for a Cruiser.

Do you possess the skill of Character, Relationship & Task? Attendees will be judged by their peers at the completion of each select Voyagers canoe trip. The young man selected will have shown the group he understands the three and has exemplified them.

Looking to know more on this? Read *How to win friends and influence people* by Dale Carnegie.

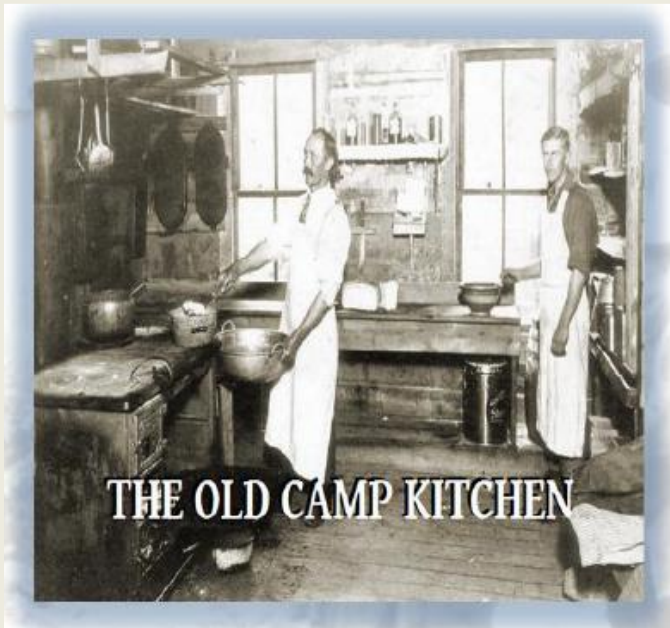
- **CHARACTER:** The mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.
- **RELATIONSHIP:** If you want to succeed, you must learn how to connect with others. If you can connect with others at every level—one-on-one, in groups, with an audience—you have the capacity for strengthening your relationships, increasing your sense of community, generating teamwork, and multiplying your productivity.
- **TASK:** The Voyager's Trips involve chores or duties around camp. Synonyms for task assignment can be a chore, duty, or job. How each man performs, will weigh in on their ability to be selected.

We want you to win!

The Voyagers Cruiser Axe is NOT the only item a youth might wish for. Each trip opens up new opportunities for earning knives, compasses, camp hatchets, and more.

How does this work? Each attendee has the opportunity to participate in competitions, acts of character, selflessness, or through the earning of money by mowing lawns, raking yards, or other odd jobs. Yes, we reward those who earn and donate their funds to the Voyagers!

The overall object is to outfit as many youths as possible with their own tools for the outdoors! The items earned through Voyagers trips are quality items that'll last a lifetime and are worthy of being handed down to future generations, that's really our goal. The more trips you attend, the better your chances are for collecting items that'll not just allow you to succeed in the bush, bush do so knowing you earned it.



PAN FRIED TROUT

- 2 Whole Trout (Cleaned)
- 1 Egg Beaten
- 1 Tablespoon Mustard
- 1 Tablespoon Flour
- 1 Tablespoon Cornmeal
- 1 Teaspoons Salt
- 1 Teaspoon Pepper
- ¼ Cup Lard (Butter May Be Substituted)

Wash & pat dry the Trout. Mix the egg and the mustard together in a small bowl. Mix flour, cornmeal, salt, and pepper together in a shallow dish. Coat trout in egg mixture, then roll in dry ingredients. Heat lard in pan (cast iron buttered) over medium-high heat until it sizzles. Place coated trout in fry pan for 2-3 minutes on each side, until coating is crusty and inside flesh is not transparent.

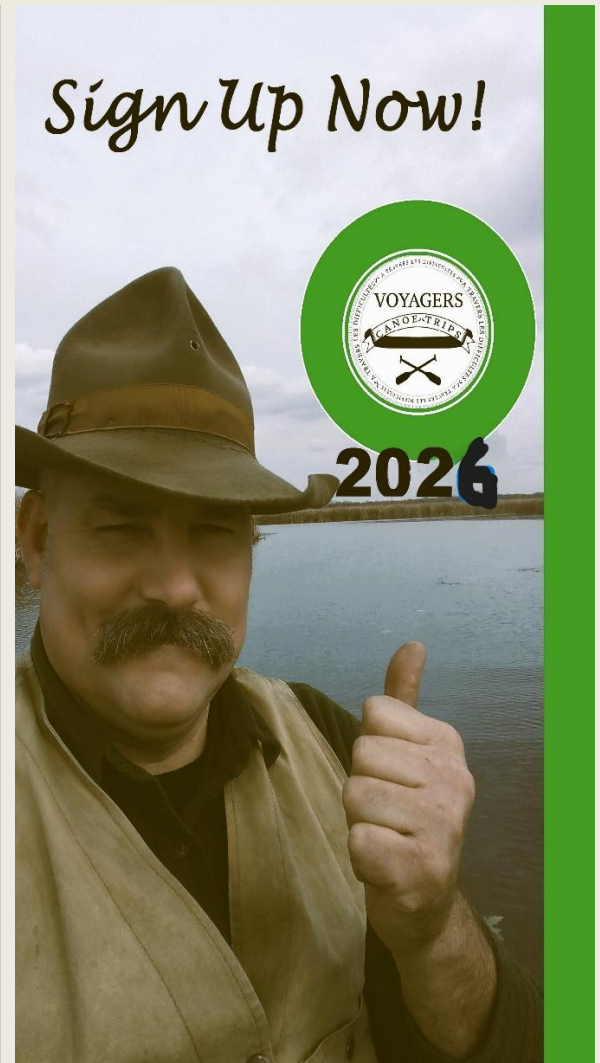


WHY ATTEND A VOYAGERS CANOE TRIP?

- 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.



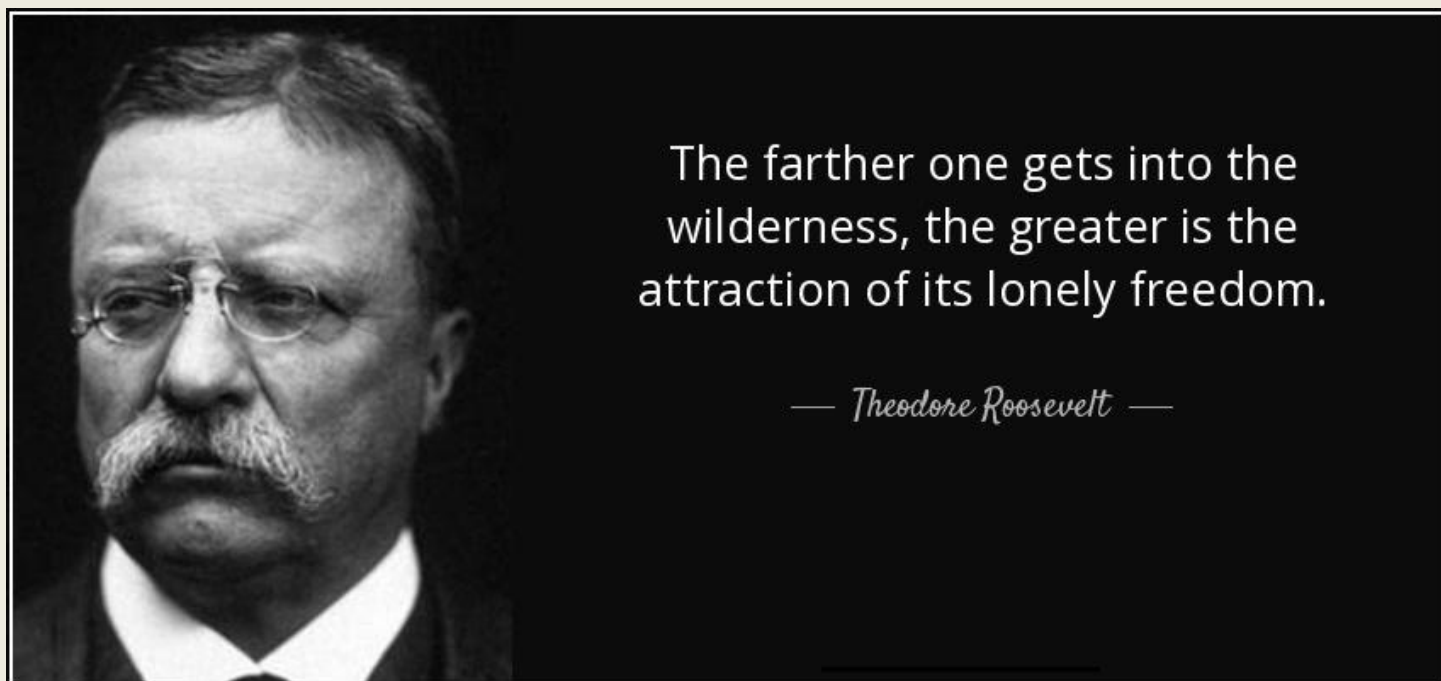
Conservation – Where is the State of Michigan Today?

Michigan has an aggressive plan with an amazing number of choices for us in the out of doors!

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- Includes 103 state parks, recreation areas, scenic sites & historic state parks
- Totals 306,148 acres of recreational land
- Provides 257,155 acres of land open to hunting
- Provides 13,496 campsites and a wide range of day-use facilities
- Maintains 140 state forest campgrounds, totaling 4,058 rustic campsites
- Hosts 25 million visitors annually
- Accommodates over 1 million camp nights annually

- 19 state harbors on the Great Lakes and connecting waterways
- 64 local community harbors developed with assistance of DNR grant funding
- 13 Harbors of Refuge
- 6,351 boat slips at both state and local harbors
- 2 state locks, one under lease to local government
- 1,100 developed public boating access sites

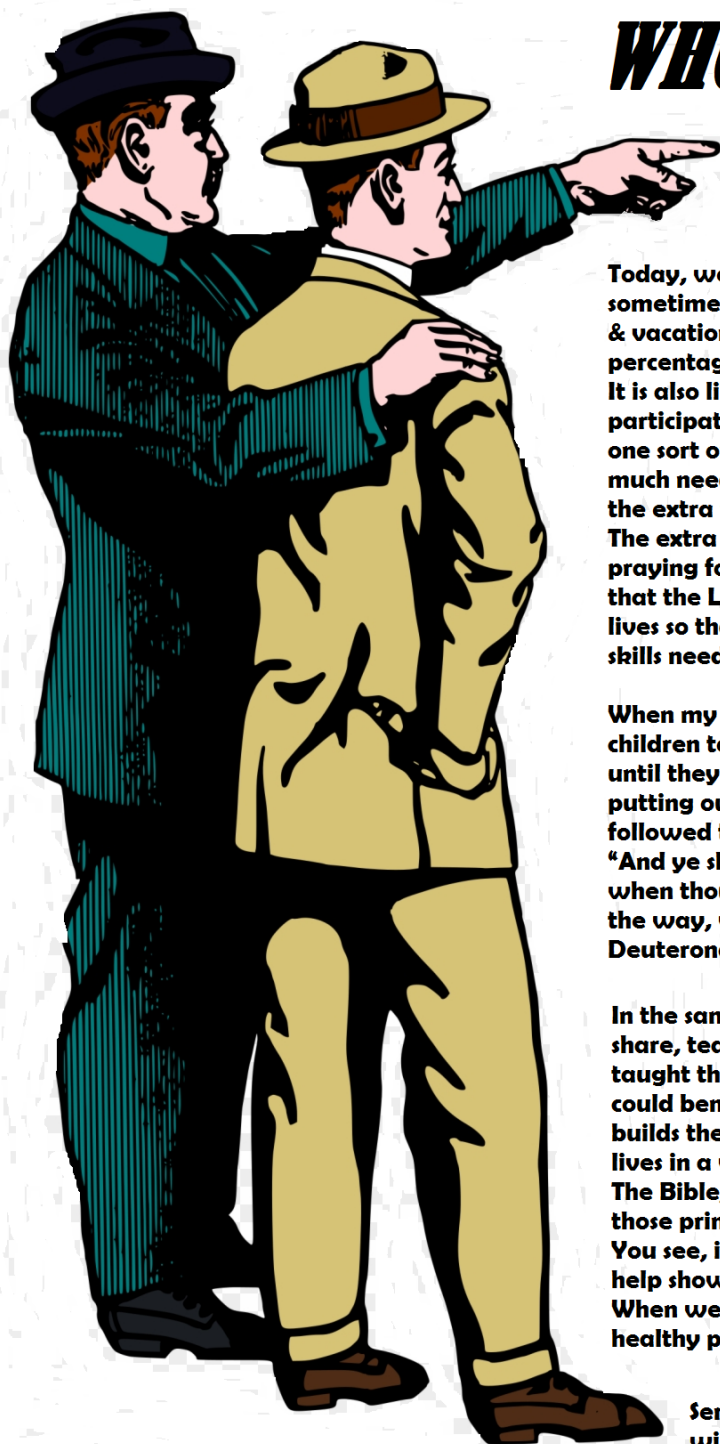


Today, make a point to consider just how great our resources truly are. In Michigan, we have more State Owned land than most of the states in our country. The Michigan DNR takes care of approximately 4.6 million acres of public lands. Michigan also has an estimated 20,116,910 acres of US forest land. Both of which, US and State land, is land that 'YOU' own, that's right, you're a stakeholder!

Conservation too often is defined too loosely. It shouldn't be just restrictions, rules and limits, even though those play important roles in maintaining it. Conservation at its core is written into our DNA, we are hardwired to care for what is ours. We were created in God's image, and what was the first thing Adam was entrusted with? The 'Garden'. The great outdoors is no different. It is ours to take care of, to preserve, which includes camping, hiking, canoeing, hunting and every other form of outdoor enjoyment. I want to share this with you because there are those who would have it differently, ultimately removing the 'wild' from wilderness.

Today, take time to look into the wonderful world of conservation. Lend a hand, volunteer or get involved. Look at your state as an asset to pass onto your children. You'll be glad you did.

WHO IS IN YOUR PATH?



Today, we all could likely admit that life is busy, and sometimes too busy right? Marriage, children, family functions & vacations - not to mention our careers, all of which take a percentage of the 168 hours we all have every week. It is also likely that out of this time, most of us volunteer, participate with charities or support non-profit functions of one sort or another. This is indeed a very good thing, and much needed in the world around us today, but what about the extra mile?

The extra mile is taking a step in the right direction, in fact praying for others to cross your path. In doing this, we pray that the Lord will allow another, or others to enter into our lives so that we might encourage them through training of life skills needed in living a healthy life.

When my wife and I started our family, we consecrated the children to the Lord, and vowed to protect and nurture them until they were adults. This promise took work, and it also too putting our own desires aside, to make sure the family followed the teachings of the Bible.

"And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."
Deuteronomy 11:19

In the same manner, we ought to look for opportunities to share, teach or encourage others with those same principles taught throughout the scriptures. How many individuals could benefit from healthy, and productive training, which builds them up, skills which allow them to live active healthy lives in a way that honors God.

The Bible, when read cover to cover cannot be argued. Those principles inside create character in us.

You see, it is my belief that we are here for one another, to help show others the way, encouraging their early steps. When we do this, they win, others win and that leads to healthy prosperous communities.

Serve someone today, even if it is inconvenient. You will be glad you did.

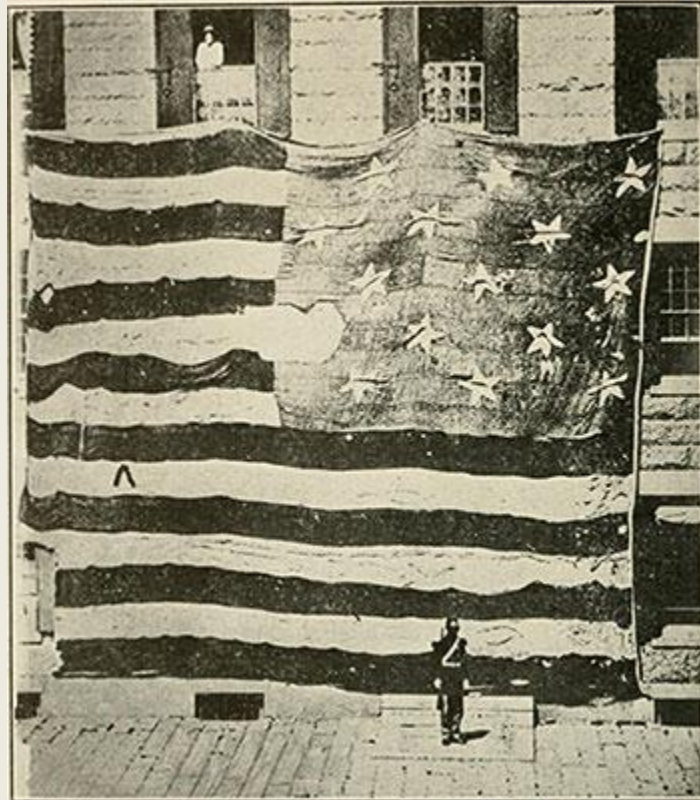
Where are our next Francis Scott Keys?

Young man, may I ask you a question? What type of man will it take to keep and maintain America, as we know it, safe, for another 100 years? So much has occurred in the past 250 years of our nation's history. Many good things have come from the struggles of our country, many good things indeed. Can we recall our history, and spend a moment considering the view points of those who came along before us? Below is a picture of a flag that sustained a battle

between the British and American in the harbor at Baltimore, Maryland. This was a turning point in the war of 1812, one that gave the still young Americans a boost of patriotism.

The man? An attorney, Francis Scott Key witnessed the twenty-five hour bombardment of Fort McHenry from a British troopship anchored some four miles away. This brave attorney had boarded the British ship to negotiate the release of an American civilian imprisoned by the British, and had been detained aboard that ship as the bombardment of the fort began. On September 14, 1814, as the dawn's early light revealed that old American flag flying over the fort, Mr. Key exultantly began jotting down the lines of the song that became our national anthem.

After the war, Mr. Key continued to practice law in the District of Columbia, what we know as Washington D.C.



The “Star-Spangled Banner” – Above is the flag that flew over Fort McHenry in 1812.

This is the flag that Francis Scott Key wrote of the song we know well, “Gave proof through the night, that our flag was still there”.

Where are our Francis Scott Keys today? What do you suppose inspired this man to write a patriotic song while aboard an enemy ship?

VOYAGERS SPRING FLY FISHING TRIP – 2025



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The morning of May 16th dawned crisp and cool. While still dark, the coffee was percolating, sausage was frying, and gear was being set out in anticipation of the troops arrival.

We had a few cancellations, so there would be more breakfast sliders for those arriving, and maybe some extras to be stuffed into pockets for the trip north!

It was threatening rain as we loaded up, but rain has never stopped the Voyagers, and as Andy says, the rainy trips have always been the best! So, loaded up, we all prayed together, and moved out onto M-43, northbound for the Mighty Muskegon.

We arrived around 11:30 am, and began the move to move the canoes from the trailer into the water, and to then load the canoes. This is often the most challenging part of the canoe trip, though we have improved measures markedly over the past decade, so it typically takes 30 minutes, and we're ready to hit the water!

Setting off down the Muskegon River, the skies had cleared, and it was warming up. The water, as usual was beautiful, and each of the paddlers was amped up, and raring to get going! Canoe camp was at a new location, about a mile further down river, and we pointed out where this would be, and what to look for as they got passed river MP 3. The water was moving pretty fast as we slid on down, with excellent views of the river valley opening up each time we rounded a bend!



The water was cool, and the leaves were just coming on the trees, with spring flowers sprouting all along the river banks. Dame's Rocket, Wintercress or Trout Lilys popped up here and there along the way, adding a nice bit of color to our float.

There are several rapids along this upper section of the Muskegon, starting below Croton, and with the water running high, those rapids were much more fun, and were relatively loud as well. That is not always the case through this stretch, so it added some fun for the men.



Andy was up ahead, guiding the troops (left), and you can see they are coming into a small rapids where the river drops about a few feet over 150 feet of river.

Around 2 pm, we rounded the last bend, pulling our canoes up onto the southern shore of the Muskegon to the new canoe camp. Earlier this year, Jay Allen and I travelled down river from his place to scout the river for camp sites. This particular was my favorite. Just the right mixture of Giants (Hemlocks) mixed through the hardwoods, high ground, with a nice landing spot.



Arriving, the troops rallied, pulled the gear ashore and up the bank into camp. In no time, we had the rain fly up, and in place, and it looked like we'd be needing the rain fly, especially with clouds beginning to move in.

(Left) The Ol' Camp Kitchen

Ready for dinner? Brisket, potato, beans and coffee, it was a meal fit for a king!

Andy & Ian were very helpful in getting camp ready to go. The camp was in place, and it appeared our needs would be sufficed, barring a wind storm.

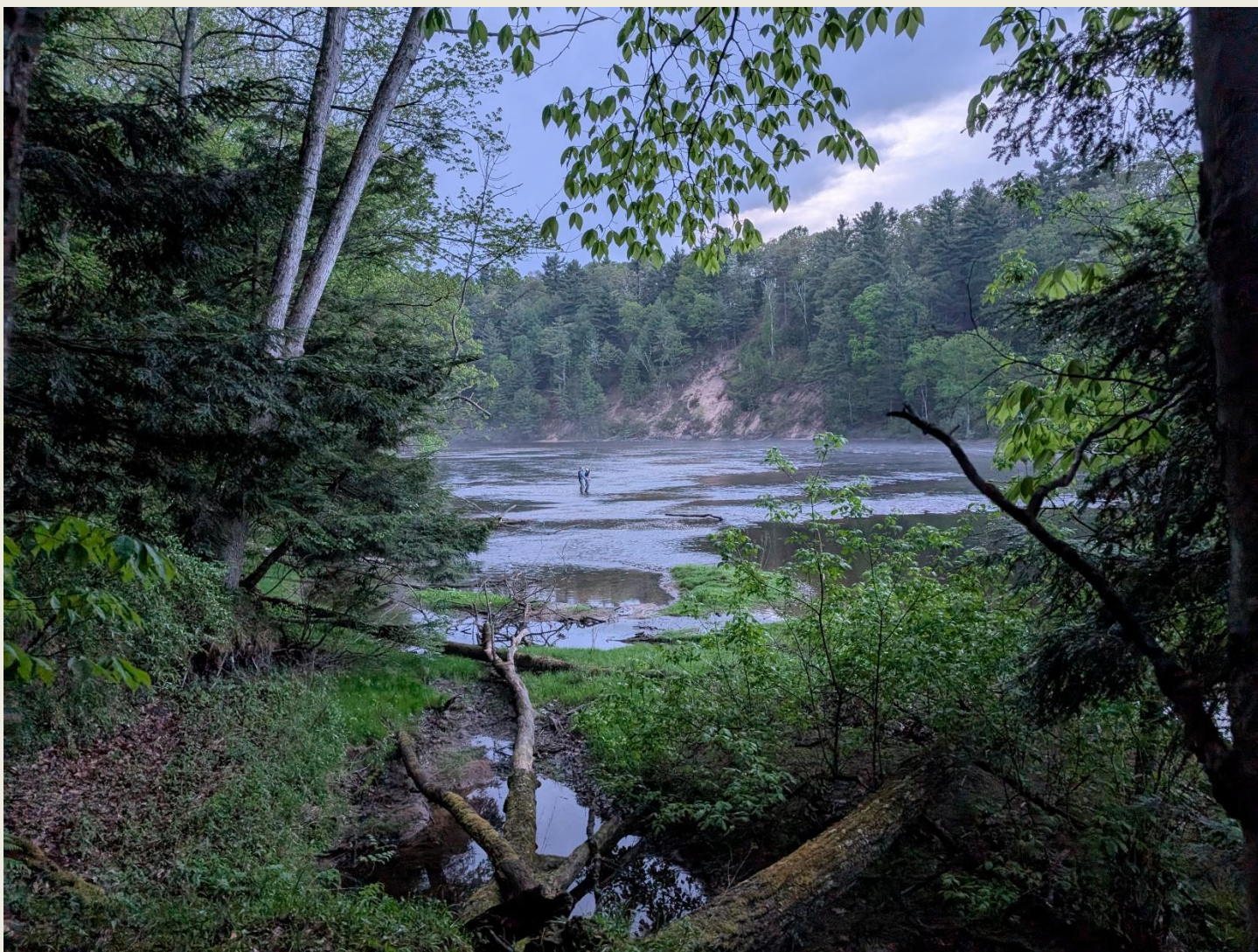
Andy Jerue (Left) looking like General McArthur coming ashore! Maybe even General Mongemery? Good show!

Jay Allen would be joining us in the late afternoon, arriving in his fishing boat, which is an incredible platform for fly fishing. Jay was working throughout the day, so he planned to arrive for dinner.

No time was wasted either. It was not long before all were in the river casting. The cloud cover now was shedding a bit of mist, and it was a little breezy, but do you think this slowed the Voyagers down? Not on a bet.

(Below) The men are reeling them in on the Muskegon!





(Above) a view from Canoe Camp overlooking the Muskegon River

All in all, we caught more fish this trip than ever before! The young men were catching, catching, releasing and frying their bounty, which pan fried, with butter, was very good around the camp fire.

A big round of thanks to our Guide, Jay Allen. This man is a premier guide, with decades of noteworthy experiences making him a natural choice for anyone looking to fly fish. Jay and his wife Heather live on the north bank of the Muskegon, in a beautiful home overlooking Jay's office – the river.

Jay has volunteered his time for several years now with the Voyagers, and we cannot tell you how thankful we truly are for such a blessing to the many young men who have been tutored by Jay.

We would like to share with you a bit more about Jay, and how you too can meet, or fish with him.

Jay and Heather had spent many years splitting their time working for tourist-related businesses in Newaygo, Michigan and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Jay operated a guided fly fishing service while Heather worked in hospitality. Together they would plan and execute guided vacations for folks of all ages. They wanted to spend more time at home, so through hard work and solid planning, a great idea was born! The Muskegon River Inn!

It was the oldest building in historic downtown Newaygo and the only building to survive a fire that swept through the town in 1883. With close to 13,000 square feet and three floors, there was plenty

of room to create a unique place for travelers. In 2017, the Allens purchased the building which already had a first-floor retail space and commenced construction of a seven-room, second-floor boutique hotel.

On November 1, 2020, the Muskegon River Inn opened for business. Now, this build, which dates back to the logging era of the Muskegon, can be reserved for a fly fishing trip, up north geta-way or just a weekend on the river, your choice. My wife Londa and I have stayed there many times, and enjoy the nice atmosphere, beutiful rooms and of course, that wonderful river!

[Your Hosts - Muskegon River Inn](#)

As we wrap up, let us thank each of sponsors again. We are blessed to have you, and we are grateful to be able to share our love for canoes, rivers and great friends with each of you.

The 2025 Spring Fly Fishing trip ended with a nice float to the takeout, just below Newaygo. As we headed home that Sunday afternoon, everyone was able to talk a bit about the number of catches, close calls and great meals enjoyed throughout the weekend. It was another successful trip.

Au revoir, et prenez soin de vous!!

