

A Superior Trip

By Matt Hahnfeld

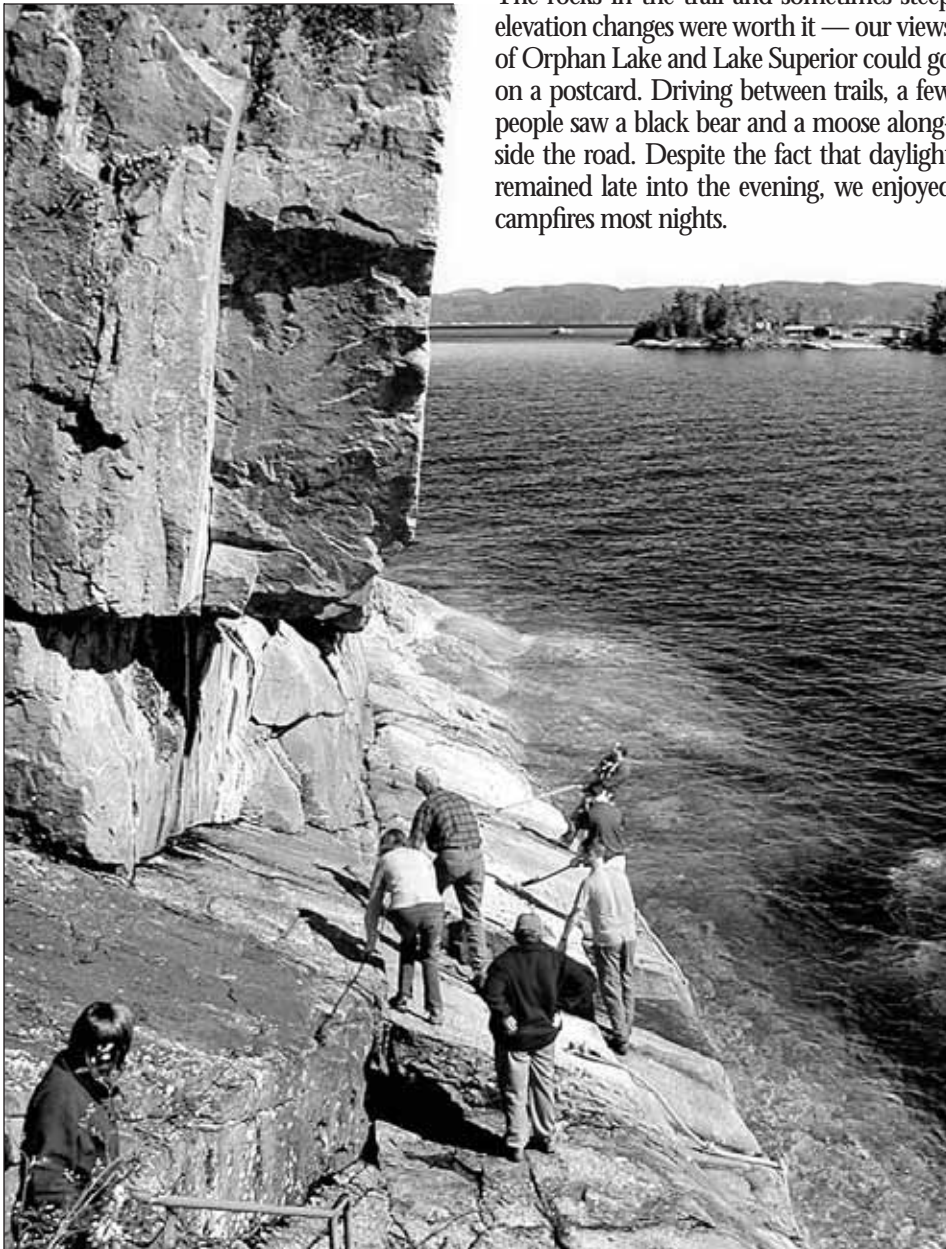
This past Memorial Day weekend, thirteen members and guests of the Western Michigan Chapter drove up to Lake Superior Provincial Park, north of Sault Ste Marie, for a weekend of camping and hiking. The weather was excellent, with just a couple of stray

rain showers, and we left the crowds behind at the Mackinaw Bridge. Once we crossed the border into Canada, it was obvious that we were in a very different place from the Lower Michigan landscape we're used to. Our hikes took us past pristine Lake Superior coastline, to large waterfalls on the Sand River, to ancient petroglyphs on rock cliffs. A highlight of the trip was the Orphan Lake trail, which had a number of spectacular overlooks, waterfalls, and huge mossy boulders. The rocks in the trail and sometimes steep elevation changes were worth it — our views of Orphan Lake and Lake Superior could go on a postcard. Driving between trails, a few people saw a black bear and a moose alongside the road. Despite the fact that daylight remained late into the evening, we enjoyed campfires most nights.



The petroglyphs above can be viewed by walking out on the rocky shore using cables and ropes to stay safe, below left. View of Orphan Lake below.

PHOTOS BY KEITH BRUNSTING



Let's Hand Out Some Credits

President's Report

By Werner Veit



Sometimes, it is easy to forget how much Paul Haan, Larry Meyer and the trail crews have accomplished. Therefore, it was particularly fitting that we looked back a bit on National Trails Day and had a chance to note all that has been accomplished on the ground for the North Country Trail since the turn of the century.

Paul's slide show was a graphic depiction of the construction and maintenance the

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Western Michigan Chapter Mission

The major purpose of the Western Michigan Chapter of the North Country Trail Association is to promote the North Country National Scenic Trail and to build and maintain the Trail in the counties of Kent and Newaygo in the State of Michigan.

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Please submit your news and dates in writing, photo prints and electronic images are welcome. All material may be edited for content or space constraints.

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crews have accomplished and the subsequent field trips showed the work under way this construction season and already done this year. The connector at Highbanks Lake was particularly significant for your President who couldn't find the old informal path and suffered the ignominy of having a mountain biker having to show him the way.

Kudos must go also to Lisa Locke, Trails Day coordinator. This was the first event with her in charge. And, of course, we can never say enough about Stephanie Black, our extraordinary chef who barbecued chicken for our afternoon treat.

If you attended the event, you must have seen how spiffy the Birch Grove Schoolhouse is looking these days. We've all noticed that with every visit, the old place looks even better.

Give a thought therefore to Gene Schmidt, who has been installing windows this Spring, to Len and JoAnne Baron who hardly let a week go by without cleaning, or painting or other important chore, or Tom Birdsall, who lives across the street, cuts the grass, looks after the place and is always ready to lend a hand as he did last month during the window installation.

All the basement windows were replaced and four new ones installed upstairs. It's a big job, first chiseling out all the old glazing, replacing the panes, re-glazing and working on the sills. Tom even found a sill in his own attic to replace one at the schoolhouse that was beyond repair.

Gene got a great deal on the new windows so we can also afford to replace the eight windows upstairs on the north side. That will happen sometime this month.

They didn't neglect the little details either. We now sport a new toilet brush.

Much of the cost for the schoolhouse improvements has been paid for by the cyclical maintenance grant awarded to the Western Michigan Chapter of the North Country Trail Association by the National Park Service. It has stretched far to include



Gene Schmidt, top photo, and Tom Birdsall, middle photo installing new windows in the Birch Grove Schoolhouse.

PHOTOS BY JOANNE BARON

new windows and other improvements due to the careful shopping of Gene and the Barons, plus all the volunteer labor.

It's time I nag again to get potential directors and officers out of the woodwork. As I have noted so often, it's not too difficult to get our members out on the trail for maintenance ... but running for office, that's another matter.

A reminder: We need candidates for President, Treasurer and Director. Write Roger Meyer at rogmey@aol.com with your suggestions, or better yet, volunteer yourself.

Events Calendar

Sign Up If You Go

Occasionally, outings have to be cancelled because of unexpected events so outing leaders strongly urge you to sign up for all events with your e-mail address, or phone number if you do not have e-mail, so you can be notified if plans change. It is also possible to check our website, or the website listed with the event, for updates and further details. E-mail updates will be sent out as each event approaches.

August

15-17 6th Annual Sleeping Bear Dunes Trip: North Manitou Island. Note the date change. This year we're going back-packing! Participants should be able to carry their own packs/food and hike up to 7-8 miles per day. North Manitou Island is a primitive wilderness area in Northern Lake Michigan. The terrain is mostly level and forested, with a number of old farms, sand dunes, and views of Lake Michigan. We'll be taking the ferry over Friday morning, returning Sunday, and (optionally) camping at Leelanau State Park Thursday night before the trip. Space is limited; register by August 8. You must also make your own ferry reservations in advance of the trip. Call Matt Hahnfeld at (616) 363-0368 or e-mail matth@everysoft.com (with subject line "North Manitou") for details or to sign up.

September

13, 27 Fall Trail Work to be determined. Paul Haan, paulhaan@sbcglobal.net

October

4 Annual Fall Fun Day at the Birch Grove Schoolhouse, details to be announced.
11 This will be an 11 mile long day hike on the Manistee River Trail. The hike will begin at 9:00 AM. You can car camp the night before or drive up in the morning as you wish. Hike details will be available closer to the hike date. If you wish to participate contact Tom Learmont at tlearmont@yahoo.com or after April 15th by phone (616) 984-4917.
9-13 Fall Colors Backpacking Trip NCT Whitefish Bay to Mouth of Two Hearted River, Andy Mytys, amytyts@sbcglobal.net

November

15 Annual Membership Meeting, details to be announced. Werner Veit, Wv12@aol.com

December

2 Chapter Holiday Party, details to be announced.

Day Hikes

For those that wish to carpool, meet at 8:30 AM at Westgate Bowling Alley, 4486 Alpine Avenue NW (M-37), Comstock Park, MI.

"Chuck's Prairie"

Date: Saturday, July 19, 10:00 AM

Hike Leader: Dave Goodman, davehiker2@aol.com

Parking: Pierce Drive (8 Mile) west of M-37 (along road)

Distance: 4.5 miles round trip

Hike: South to second two track (just south of prairie openings)

See: Beautiful oak savannah, including National Forest prairie restoration.

Best Season: Summer

Three Lakes Hike

Date: Saturday, August 16, 10:00 AM

Hike Leader: Dave Goodman, davehiker2@aol.com

Parking: Walkup Lake Campground, on Cleveland Drive west of Bitely

Distance: 7+ miles round trip

Hike: North to view of Highbanks Lake (3rd lake), length could be shortened by turning around at Condon Lake.

See: Three beautiful highbank lakes, beaver activity (maybe a fourth lake?), mature forests.

Best Season: Excellent year round.

"Coastal Marsh" Hike

Date: Wednesday, September 10, 10:00 AM

Hike Leader: Roger Meyer, (616) 975-1937, rogmey@aol.com

Date: Saturday, September 20, 10:00 AM

Hike Leader: Len and JoAnne Baron (616) 677-3598, jlbaron@charter.net

Parking: 40th Street west of M-37

Distance: 7+ miles round trip

Hike: North on NCT to first creek with bridge with rope railing.

See: Rolling hills with oak forest, unique coastal marshes, deep woods, no bikes

Best Season: Late summer into fall

Four Creeks Hike

Date: Saturday, November 1, 10:00 AM

Hike Leader: Roger Meyer, (616) 975-1937, rogmey@aol.com

Parking: Pierce Drive (8 Mile) west of M-37 (along road)

Distance: About 7 miles round trip

Hike: North to fourth creek (Tank Creek)

See: Four beautiful, crystal clear cold water creeks, mixed and diverse forests (may be some recent logging, burning in the area).

Best Season: Excellent in the fall (maples), good year round.



Freshly groomed trail, cut during Spring Clean-up Day on April 19, connects the Highbanks Lake campground to the North Country Trail. On this sunny day the ice was breaking up on the lake and the snow was nearly gone from the campground road by the end of the work day.

PHOTO BY CHUCK VANNETTE



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PHOTO BY KEITH BRUNSTING

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Maintainers Needed

The Western Michigan Chapter is in need of a few new volunteers to adopt the section of the North Country Trail in the Lowell State Game Area, and possibly for sections in Newaygo County, for regular trail maintenance. Maintainers visit their section of trail three times a year (April, June and October) to make sure brush and blow downs are cleared; blazing is in good condition; tread is in good repair; bridges, signs and register boxes are maintained; and no unauthorized uses are taking place. Most sections are about three miles in length and can be maintained in a full day.

If you think you would like to volunteer, review the *Trail Maintainers Guide* on the Chapter's website:

www.northcountrytrail.org/wmi

For more information, contact:

Paul Haan

(616) 734-9443

paulhaan@sbcglobal.net

(e-mail preferred)



Trails Day 2008

There were thirty-five people that gathered at the Birch Grove Schoolhouse on Trails Day, June 7. The weather was warm, but a breeze made it delightful. Continental breakfast prepared by Lisa Locke consisting of various bagels and creams, grapes and coffee. Paul Haan gave a presentation on the many trail projects that took place since 2000. An mid-day hike explored the new Nichols Lake trail connector and continued on the main trail for two miles. The group took a break at new bridge over Ce-



PHOTOS BY JOANNE BARON

dar Creek. Stephanie Black grilled chicken, served baked beans, cole slaw, lemonade and cookies.