

Working the Streets for Fireworks

Who funds the Frankfort fireworks?



By Susan Koenig
Current Contributor

Elberta and Frankfort have always had somewhat of a rivalry in one way or another. But one such rivalry that you may not know about has been going on for the past 17 years: a hot annual competition between Elberta’s Mike Jones and Frankfort’s Steve Christian that always ends with a bang. Every Fourth of July, Jones and Christian walk up and down Frankfort’s Main Street collecting money to fund the fireworks display that is lit off of the Frankfort pier and can be seen from both the Elberta and Frankfort beaches. They do this for eight to nine hours, starting just before the parade at 10 a.m. and not ending until close to dusk. The winner is declared that night, based on

who brings in the most cash. Both men are very invested in this small community: Jones, born and raised in neighboring Manistee, is a retired chief warrant officer with the U.S. Coast Guard who has since served as a commissioner for Benzie County and now serves on the Gilmore Township Zoning Board and the Planning Commission, as well as the Chamber of Commerce and the County Convention and Business Bureau. He and his wife, Iris, have owned and operated the Wayfarer Lodging in Elberta since 1994. His mother-in-law—known as “Mom”—has worked for many years at Dinghy’s Restaurant, which is owned by Jones’s buddy and cohort in the fireworks effort, Christian, also a dedicated community volunteer. To help get the attention of both residents and those who are just in town for

the day, Jones and Christian wear standout ensembles of American flag pants, blue vests, and various head coverings—not to mention comfortable shoes. You can’t miss them, in part because of their outlandish outfits, but mostly because they won’t let you; they call out to you good-naturedly and point at their donation buckets during the parade, as well as later on in the day as you’re trying to enjoy an ice cream cone on the sidewalk. Jones and Christian keep their cash accumulations separate, making deposits to the Frankfort-Elberta Chamber of Commerce throughout the day. When the total is tallied, the loser gets to buy the winner a libation or two at the end of what is sure to have been a very long day.

Please see Boom on page 3

Field of Dreams

Community tradition connected by America’s pastime

By Randi Lyn Stoltz
Current Contributor

If you see the lights on at the Honor ball fields, pull in, park, turn off your lights, and head over to the bleachers. I promise, you’re bound to catch an entertaining night of softball. An age span of 45 years ranges on the field on any given night, and the common theme is, “We’re here to have a good time.” But make no mistake, there are some seriously talented players out there, some who play on multiple nights and put the time in, who make incredible plays and get on base with a hit nearly every time they go to bat. The world of softball in Benzie County

is more than a night of slow pitch, running bases, and hotdogs. It’s a culture, a family, a network, and—most importantly—a tradition that has reigned strong for more than four decades. Some folks may incorrectly call them beer leagues. Which, don’t get me wrong, there are some young-guns who haven’t yet learned their limits and some veterans who have one night a week to let loose and choose to do so after a game. (Not to mention that a strikeout means you bring beer for your entire team the following week.) But a win is a win, and a loss is a loss, and there are still the teams to beat who continue to win their given leagues season after

Please see Dreams on page 7

Celebrate The Fourth

- 8am - Firecracker 5k Race, Beulah
- 9am - 3pm Lake Ann Homing (Games, Music, Food)
- 10am - Independence Day Parade, Frankfort
- 10am - 5pm Art at Mineral Springs Park, Frankfort
- 10am - Carnival opens (July 2 - 5)
- 10:30am - Kids’ Games in the Park, Beulah
- 11am - 3pm - Face Painting in the Park, Beulah
- Noon - Lion’s Club Chicken BBQ, Frankfort
- Noon - 3pm - Sand Sculpture Contest, Frankfort
- Noon - Food Concessions, Beulah
- 1:30pm - Independence Day Parade, Beulah
- Dusk - Fireworks! Frankfort and Beulah

From Beyond the Horizon

A jubilant Frankfort crowd greets the paddlers from Wisconsin

By Nancy Bissonnette Bordine
Current Contributor

They gathered on the shore of Frankfort Harbor, all eyes on the horizon. The breeze ruffling their hair was subtly chilled from traveling over the yet cold waters of Lake Michigan. The white silhouettes of three boats approaching the shore gave them great relief, for those boats were the guardians escorting their sons on an epic journey. Just 27 hours earlier, their sons had set forth from Algoma, Wisconsin, on 14-foot standup paddleboards—oversized surfboards, like those used by the Hawaiian kings of old to travel between the islands of their kingdom. This sunny June 24th morning, a crowd awaited their arrival, poised to give them a royal welcome to Lake Michigan’s eastern shore. For their sons—Nicholas Darga, Jeff Guy, Joe Lorenz, Kwin Morris, and J. Mueller, all Traverse City residents—this was the

second attempt to cross Lake Michigan on standup paddleboards. The five young men had tried to make a similar crossing in late August 2014, an event which *The Betsie Current* reported on last year, but they were thwarted by late-summer conditions. “They waited too long [in the season], and their window of opportunity wasn’t good because the waters of the lake had warmed up,” Morris’s father explains. “Even though



Someone was *very* happy to see Joe Lorenz after his over-night paddle across Lake Michigan. Photo by Nancy Bissonnette Bordine.

the water is colder now, it’s calmer. They had Coast Guard-certified boat captains select the timing and route for them based on water temperature, available daylight, and shipping lanes to maximize their safety and minimize their risk.” Stand Up For Great Lakes, as the guys called their 60-mile journey across Lake Michigan, featured a bold and dramatic athletic event, but its real purpose was to bring in \$10,000 for the Chicago-based nonprofit Alliance for the Great Lakes, which raises awareness about the threats facing the largest freshwater source in the world. “My son Nicholas is one of the paddlers out there,” Becky Darga says. “They’ve been paddling across Lake Michigan all night. They’re all guys who grew up in Traverse City and just love this Great Lake. They are young men who understand the importance of the freshwater

Please see SUP? on page 8



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Dr. Jake Flynn: Running Races and Runny Noses

Questions & Answers with community faces

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 33-year-old Jake Flynn can be found at the Crystal Lake Clinic in Interlochen treating everyone from newborns to centenarians, everything from snotty noses to heart conditions. Flynn, born and raised in Benzie County, went away to get an education and then returned to practice family medicine in the small community that feels more like home to him than any of the exotic places where he studied. Though Flynn attended the Ross School of Medicine in the Caribbean and followed up with rotations in cities as diverse as Miami and Manhattan, he feels fortunate to have returned to his roots.

If you follow running at all, his name might sound familiar. A 2000 graduate from Benzie Central High School, Flynn was the cross country state champion for 1997, 1998, and 1999, as well as Mr. Michigan Cross Country in 1999. He still holds the Class C state record for five kilometers at 15 minutes and 12 seconds. Not only that, but he excelled at track, too: Flynn was state champion in the two-mile in 1999, and he still holds the school record of 4:14 for the mile. At Central Michigan University—where he studied exercise physiology—Flynn was named All American and Academic All American as the 23rd fastest in the nation. He’s run seven marathons, including Boston, and thousands of races, including one of his favorites, the Firecracker 5k, which is held in Beulah every year on the morning of the Fourth of July.

Starting in 1995, the summer before he was to enter 8th grade, Flynn ran the Firecracker 5k for the first time. Since then, he has run it 19 out of the last 21 years, missing only once while he was away in medical school and once for injury.

Continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, The Betsie Current caught up with Flynn—who celebrated one year at Crystal Lake Clinic on July 1—between patients.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: When and why did you move back to Northern Michigan?

FLYNN: Like so many locals, when I graduated from high school, I left and said that I was never coming back. I have lived and worked in hospitals all over the country, and I’ve seen so many beautiful places and met so many amazing people. However, at the end of my education, I took an audition rotation with Munson [in Traverse City] and was so impressed with the Northern Michigan way of life; kind, polite, laid-back people who would hold doors for people and say, “Good morning,” to strangers. That—coupled with family-like staff at Munson—let me know that I had found my place in the world. Here I have all that I need in life for good running, plus the people I love and beautiful things to see: I prefer sunsets on Lake Michigan to mountains, so this is where I chose to be.

CURRENT: When did you start working in Benzie County?

FLYNN: In the final year of my contract with Munson, the Crystal Lake Clinic contacted me, as one of their providers would be leaving the following summer [which was last year]. These were my family doctors growing up and some of the smartest people that I had looked up to as a child who were asking me

if I wanted to be part of their team—guys like Geoff Turner, Rick Neilson, and George Ryckman who I knew well and respected, so I was very interested. I entertained other offers and opportunities to continue to travel around the country and practice medicine, but—at the end of the day—this is the area I want to be, with the people I love. So I signed.

CURRENT: About how many patients do you see per week? What are you treating? Are you taking new patients?

FLYNN: I see about 90 patients every week. Everything from viral colds to managing myocardial infarction. The average age of the patients I see is probably 55, and I see an equal amount of men and women. We have a pediatrician in the office, so—although I’m able to see pediatric patients—he takes most of them, and I handle most of the chronic care,



Dr. Jake Flynn at Crystal Lake Clinic. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, COPD, and yearly physicals, etc. Yes, I am accepting new patients; I’m happy to see anyone. I do occasionally pick up shifts at the Paul Oliver Emergency Room in Frankfort, too.

CURRENT: How have you seen your work grow and change since you started at Crystal Lake Clinic a year ago? And how do you hope it will continue to grow and change?

FLYNN: I love my job—so much so that I bought in as partner. I’m committed here for life. It’s so much more fun to go to work now that I’m establishing relationships with my patients. When you know and truly care about the people you are seeing, it drives you to go the extra mile to give them the best care possible.

CURRENT: With the busy life of a doctor, you still somehow manage to squeeze in daily workouts—how many miles do you run in a typical week?

FLYNN: In college, I would run 90-100 miles per week. But these days I’m satisfied if I’m getting 30-40 miles per week. Shoes last longer now.

CURRENT: You’ve run the Beulah Firecracker 5k many, many times. How many times have you won it? How do you expect to do this year?

FLYNN: I don’t know how many years I’ve won it, but I think only nine or 10 times. I haven’t won in recent years, because there are so many talented runners produced by Benzie Central [High School] these days.

CURRENT: How have you seen the Firecracker 5k change since you began running it more than two decades ago?

FLYNN: The Firecracker is getting so popular, and it deserves to be. It’s a beautiful course that starts and ends at Crystal Lake. It was created by the living legend Coach [Pete] Moss. I personally remember the year that we first broke 100 runners! Timed with a stopwatch

and 100 popsicle sticks, marked 1-100 to keep track of your finish. Drop your stick with your name on it into the coffee can with your age group and wait for them to be tallied—by hand! They had it down to a science, so results could be ready in as little as two to three hours, haha. Now, things are electronically timed with your own personal chip timer in your race bib and results are instantaneous, flawless, and posted online and to social media before you can even jump in the lake to cool off. Pretty amazing progress, I’d say. [Editor’s Note: Last year, the Firecracker had more than 600 runners participating.]

CURRENT: What do you like best about the Firecracker 5k?

FLYNN: My favorite thing about the Firecracker is Coach Moss. He’s the reason I train so hard for that race every year. He coached me and taught me how to be successful, and I always want to win for him. He taught me how to be successful in running, but it carried over to all things in life beautifully. Things like, “Don’t stop until you’ve crossed the finish line,” “Never look back; don’t worry about what’s behind you; focus on the race in front of you,” and “It doesn’t matter if you’re face down, in the mud, with a broken leg—you stand up, clean yourself off, and finish with a Benzie sprint, every time.” All of these lessons have resounded in my head throughout college and medical school.

CURRENT: How have you seen Benzie County change since you moved away and came back? What are your hopes for the area in the future?

FLYNN: I love the way Frankfort has continued to grow. Such a beautiful downtown. And I love what they’ve done with the public beach at Crystal Lake, and I’m interested to see what they’ll do next. It’s also exciting to see new development in Elberta.

CURRENT: What else does Benzie County need?

FLYNN: Beulah needs something to draw more traffic—I vote for a brewery! It’s such an amazing location, and Crystal Lake is the most beautiful inland lake. It has so much appeal, I think; it’s the right attraction to go along with the Hungry Tummy and the Cherry Hut.

CURRENT: What are your favorite local events and activities? Any favorite dining, recreation, hiking spots?

FLYNN: I do admit that I love Cherry Festival. Fourth of July fireworks in Frankfort. Favorite local dining has got to be The Fusion; a beer at Stormcloud; movies at The Garden. Recreation would be hiking at Pyramid Point and watching sunsets over Lake Michigan. Perfect.

CURRENT: What’s your perfect summer day look like in Benzie County? How would you spend it?

FLYNN: Wake up with some French press coffee on the dock with the dogs. 10-mile run around Crystal Lake. Golf with my dad. Sushi at Fusion. Bonfire on Lake Michigan with the people I love. Sunset. Wait for the stars to come out.

Interested in running the Firecracker 5k in Beulah at 8 a.m. on the Fourth of July? Show up at the pavilion in Beulah on July 3 from 5-7 p.m. with \$20 to pre-register; day-of registration is \$25 and begins at 6:45 a.m. on July 4 at the pavilion. Cost includes a T-shirt for the first 450 registrants.

Want to schedule an appointment with Dr. Jake Flynn at the Interlochen office of Crystal Lake Clinic? Call 231-275-7965, or check out www.CrystalLakeClinic.com to make an appointment with another healthcare provider at one of their other offices in Frankfort or Benzonia.

Boom

Continued from page 1

Why do they do it? Well, what would the Fourth of July be without a fireworks display?

From small towns to big cities, most of us look forward to the big night, and this has certainly been a highlight in Frankfort, where an estimated 20,000 onlookers gathered in 2014, according to the Frankfort Police Department. This is a huge influx of humanity—and concurrent traffic—for a town of only about 1,300 year-round residents.

According to the Frankfort-Elberta Chamber, the cost of fireworks has risen to \$420 per minute, or between \$12,000 and \$14,000 for the annual display. Most of the money comes in from community contributions, and the Chamber is responsible for the remaining balance. (Your taxes do not furnish one penny toward the fireworks display that we all know, love, anticipate, and take for granted.)

In addition to Jones and Christian’s physical exertions, contributions arrive from other sources. Red containers are placed strategically around town for collections on the Fourth of July. Most of the Chamber’s 200 business members contribute ahead of time, and individual donors help, too, such as one thoughtful family whose home fronts the beach.

So as you look up over Lake Michigan at the stars and the impressive, colorful show this Independence Day, please remember all who make this possible—and maybe think about putting a little something in the collection containers.

The Frankfort Fourth of July parade begins at 10 a.m. at the east end of Main Street by Graceland Fruit; it continues west along Main Street until it turns at the Benzie Shores District Library onto 7th Street, then turns again onto Forest Avenue and continues westward. The parade turns onto Michigan Avenue, then gets back onto Main Street and heads east again all the way back to Graceland Fruit where it began.

There will be free Benzie Bus shuttles in Frankfort from 12-6 p.m. on the Fourth of July. Normally the free shuttle service will operate Thursday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. However, with the parade in the morning, the service will not start until noon on July 4. Get on the bus to avoid parking dilemmas during the day. Fireworks begin at dusk and can be seen from both Elberta and Frankfort beaches.



Behind the Scenes

The Frankfort Police Department has an organizational challenge to plan for on the Fourth of July. In addition to keeping everyone safe, they have to help navigate the 20,000 festival-goers around town.

There will be some minor changes to this year’s traffic control, according to Chief of Police Rob Loznowski. The turn-around at the beach will be designated entirely for handicapped parking, and no dogs are allowed—not because we don’t love dogs, but because at least once every year a panicky canine escapes family control and races down Main Street trying to escape the noise. Please leave your pets at home; they don’t enjoy fireworks!

Other tips from Chief Loznowski:

- Please do not bring your own fireworks; they will be confiscated.
- No glassware at the event; cans, plastic, and paper are safer.
- Remember that the closer you park to the beach, the longer it will take you to leave for home. It usually takes the police department about an hour and a half—or longer—to clear out all the traffic.
- You can drop off your family, friends, and gear in two spots that will be labeled for drop-off and pick-up only, no parking. One area will be on the south side of Michigan Avenue, the other on the north; Hefron Hill up to Paul Oliver from the beach will be closed to all traffic.
- The police department will erect barricades between the condominiums; if you leave your car in the prohibited areas, it will be impounded. Sorry.
- A team of six to eight Citizen Emergency Response Team members will be on hand to help with traffic control and any problems that visitors might have. We want everyone to have a healthy and happy Fourth of July.

Beulah Fireworks

For 25 years, Richard Ide of Beulah has been gathering funds for Crystal Lake’s popular fireworks display, which carries an annual ticket of approximately \$7,000. According to the Benzie County Sheriff’s Department, an estimated 10,000 people view the show from the village, from boats on the lake, and from homes on both the north and south shores of Crystal Lake.

The Village of Beulah provides the barge from which the display is launched, and Crystal Lake Marina provides a boat to tow the barge. Without the support and cooperation of the community and volunteers, there would be no celebration—and considering the huge crowds in Frankfort, many people have begun to realize the benefits of coming to Beulah instead for the Fourth of July.

Richard and his wife, Rose, have lived and worked in Benzie County for more than 40 years—they owned and operated the barbershop in Beulah—so they know nearly everyone, which makes them good at fundraising and organizing. He does the fundraising, while she does the organizing.

Richard personally visits about 120 businesses and individuals to collect donations for the fireworks. He begins sending letters asking for contributions from his winter home in Florida, and when he returns home to our fair shores, he starts his door-to-door solicitation about three to four weeks before the actual July 4th celebration. (Richard jokes that everyone knows he’s coming, and if he can’t find them on the first visit, they know he’ll be back.)

Though Richard is the primary fundraiser for the fireworks, he gives credit to his super duo volunteer team of Vicky and Kitty, who manage to collect a substantial contribution from people during the day. Meanwhile, Rose organizes Beulah’s Fourth of July parade. Look for her on the last float, distributing thousands of beads and waving to the crowds.

So far, the Benzie County Sheriff’s Department has had no serious problems with traffic control on this side of the lake, although some congestion does materialize at the corner of US-31 and M-115 as people return home from the Frankfort fireworks, so the use of River Road is encouraged.

Whichever town you choose to commemorate the birth of our nation, remember the efforts of all the good people of Benzie County who work hard to ensure glorious festivities for us all.

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Power Vinyasa with Jenn at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 7:45-8:45am.

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. Infants and toddlers (+ parents/caregivers) will have fun rhyming and moving with Miss Char, as well as a focus on repetition. Each week, children build their repertoire of rhymes, both old and new. 10-11am.

Fitness Fusion with Beth at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 10:15-11:15am.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market at 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) in Benzonia. 3-7pm.

Tuesdays

Sunrise Flow Yoga with Lara at Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 7:45-8:45am.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Honor Farmers' Market in Maley Park. 9am-3pm.

Benzie Shores District Library offers assistance with technology. Learn how to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 10am-12pm.

Tangle Time: Tangling is a simple way of creating designs from repetitive patterns. It is easy to learn, portable, fun, relaxing, and can be enjoyed by all ages 12 and up. Bring your own materials—cardstock, paper, fabric, jewelry, clay, wood, rocks—or use those provided. Benzonia Public Library at 891 Michigan Avenue in Benzonia. 2:30-4:30pm.

Earth's Mightiest Heroes summer reading program. Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. 4:30-5pm.

Minecraft Club at Darcy Library in Beulah. 5-7pm.

Zumba classes at The Gathering Place in Honor are open to the general public and taught by Suzanne Waring. 6-7pm.

Pick-up soccer at Memorial Park across from Shop & Save and behind Watson Benzie car dealership in Benzonia. Open to ages 12 and up. All skill levels encouraged. 6-8pm.

Wednesdays

Power Vinyasa with Jenn at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 7:45-8:45am.

Open studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 10am-4pm.

Tai Chi for beginners. Space is limited, so please contact Aimé Merizon at 231-645-3711 or artis4anyone@gmail.com to register. Suggested donation is \$10 per session. Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. 11am-12pm.

Knit 2gether at Darcy Library in Beulah. Crocheters also welcome. 1-3pm.

Thursdays

Fitness Fusion with Beth at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 7:45-8:45am.

Elberta Farmers' Market at the Elberta Pavilion Park. 8am-12:30pm.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Guided hiking tours at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville are a great way to learn about Michigan history. The environment and the sculptures are a fun activity for adults and families. 9-10am.

Every Hero Has A Story is a national program that encourages early literacy and fosters a lifelong love of reading while having fun. Children of all ages are welcome at Story Time with Miss Charlotte at Benzie Shores District Library. 10-11am.

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. 1-5pm.

Quilting at Darcy Library in Beulah. 2:30-5:30pm.

Storytime for preschoolers at the Benzonia Public Library in the Children's Room. Miss Amanda will lead us through an informal time to socialize, make new friends, and hear great stories. 3-4pm.

Writers Club for kids and teens at Darcy Library in Beulah. Share what you're working on—novel, comic book, or anything else—and if you'd like, get feedback from your peers. 3-5pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center, including families! Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult and child pair. It can be as fun or focused as a student prefers, and all skill levels should consider taking part. 3-6pm.

Storytime with Kris at Darcy Library in Beulah. 4:30pm.

Teen yoga and meditation with Jenn at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 4-65pm.

Power Vinyasa with Jenn at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 5:15-6:15pm.

Steven Fernand sings the best songs from the last century at the Cold Creek Inn in Beulah. No cover. 6-9pm.

Beulah Music in the Park: A different musical artist every Thursday. Free family fun. Bring a chair or blanket. Brought to you by the Crystal Lake Community Business Association along with many gracious sponsors. 7-8pm.

Open Mic Night at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 231-352-9843. 8pm.

Fridays

Sunrise Flow Yoga with Lara at Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 7:45-8:45am.

Pilates sculpt with Anna at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Crystal Mountain Farmers' Market in Thompsonville. 3-6pm.

Saturdays

Birding with Keith Wesphal: Hike the Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort with Keith, an active birder for 48 years, to identify birds by their song. Bring your binoculars to spot birds that make the 30-acre preserve their home each spring. Meet at the Art Park trailhead. Suggested \$5 donation. 8:30-10am.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Frankfort Farmers' Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th & 9th streets, along the beautiful waterfront. 9am-1pm.

Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

Lego Saturdays at Benzonia Public Library. For boys and girls ages 6 to 106. Dates will vary, so call 231-882-4111 to see if there will be Legos on Saturday!

Steven Fernand sings the best songs from the last century at the Cold Creek Inn in Beulah. No cover. 6-9pm.

Sundays

Guided hiking tours at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville are a great way to learn about Michigan history. The environment and the sculptures are a fun activity for adults and families. 9-10am.

Integrative Yoga at the Oliver Art Center. Young or old, novice or seasoned practitioner, yoga is for everyone! Explore yoga on your own terms and discover all that it can do for you. Adult drop-in fee is \$15, student/senior drop-in fee is \$10. 10:30am-12pm.

ON DECK

Thursday, July 2

Free puppet show and summer reading program at Benzonia Public Library. Mr. Jimmy and his side kick Finn will entertain you with a hilarious puppet, show followed by a super fun craft, so you do not want to miss this! 3-4pm.

Thursday, July 2

Head to Live For Art Gallery to meet artist Janet Grissom and to see her beautiful new oil landscape paintings. Grissom's travels and life experiences have influenced her work and have led her to work with more vibrant and textured colors creating landscapes that are memorably tactile. 273 S. Benzie Blvd. in Beulah. 231-882-9370. 5-7pm.

Thursday, July 2

Sip & Dab summer event at St. Ambrose Cellars at 841 S Pioneer Road just outside Beulah/Honor. Come paint and sip wine and mead. You must register, as there are only 15-20 spaces. 231-383-4262. 6-9pm.

Thursday, July 2

Beulah Music in the Park, featuring the Standing Hamptons, an electric blues band. Free family fun. Bring a chair or blanket. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 2

Cousin Curtiss takes the stage at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort. 8-10pm.

Thursday, July 2 - Sunday, July 5

Schmidt’s Amusement Carnival returns to Frankfort’s Open Space Park with rides and games. Opens at 10am. 231-352-7251.

Friday, July 3

The Benzie Central High School class of 1990’s 25th reunion. BBQ, bonfire, BYOLC: bring your own laawn chair. \$10-\$15, depending on food costs. Contact Julie Orr for more info and to RSVP. 5pm.

Friday, July 3

Abigail Stauffer takes the stage at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort. 8-10pm.

Saturday, July 4

Frankfort’s Independence Day Celebration: The day’s activities begin at 7:30am with the Men’s Club Pancake Breakfast at St. Ann Catholic Church at 508 Crystal Avenue (M-22), and the breakfast goes until 11am. Next is the decorated bike contest in the Graceland Fruit parking lot at 9:30am, then the parade at 10am, followed by \$1 Koegel Hot Dogs at the First Congregational Church at 431 Forest Avenue after the parade until 1pm. Art in the Park will be going on from 10am to 5pm, and the Frankfort Lion’s Club will be holding their annual chicken BBQ at noon—both events occur in Mineral Springs Park. To participate in the sand-sculpture contest at noon, you only need to bring your tools, sunscreen, and imagination to the right of the pier on Lake Michigan beach. Judging held at 3pm. Big Bob’s Up North Outfitters is hosting Uncle Sam’s Shoot-out Fishing Tournament. The AMAZING Fireworks will begin at dusk (approximately 10:30pm) on the Frankfort beach, but they can definitely be seen from the Elberta beach, too.

Saturday, July 4

Beulah’s Independence Day Celebration: Start your 4th of July off with a bang—the bang of a gun at the starting line of the Firecracker 5k Race at 8am. At 9am is the 1-mile family walk/run, and from 8 to 11am is a pancake breakfast. There will be kids’ games beginning at 10:30am and face painting at 11am in the park. Enjoy food and fun all day, beginning at noon. The parade begins at 1:30pm, and the kids’ greased pole climb at 2:30pm. The coin hunt on the beach is at 3:30pm, and make sure to get your rubber duckie to the starting line at 4:30pm. Stay downtown for the fireworks at dusk (approximately 10:30pm), or enjoy them from the boat or the cottage!

Saturday, July 4

Lake Ann’s Homecoming Celebration: Visit www.AlmiraHistoricalSociety.org or call 231-275-7362 or 231-313-1960 to learn more.

Sunday, July 5

Herring Lake Baptist Church Choir’s “Heal Our Land” concert at 4433 South Scenic Hwy. 231-352-9398. 231-352-9398. 11am-12pm.

Sunday, July 5

The Pistil Whips take the stage at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort. 8-10pm.

Tuesday, July 7

Pockets, Poems, & Pop-Ups is part of the summer craft series at Benzonia Public Library. Pam Yee will be in the lower level of the Mills Community House sharing three techniques in an altered book: an art form that uses pages from a book that has been read and needs a new purpose. The pages of the book are the

canvas, and you are the artist who can draw, paint, cut, tear, color, glue, collage, and make new pages that tell a new story. All materials are provided for this free class. Call 231-882-4111 to register for this fast-paced class. 1:30-3:30pm.

Wednesday, July 8

Garret Johns “Piano Man” concert at the Elberta Historical Waterfront Park. 231-352-7251. 7-8pm.

Wednesday, July 8

Benzie Community Band Concert featuring music from the stage and the screen at the Benzie Historical Museum in Benzonia. Donations accepted. 7-8pm.

Wednesday, July 8

Garret Johns “Piano Man” concert at the Elberta Historical Waterfront Park. 231-352-7251. 7-8pm.

Thursday, July 9

Head to Live For Art Gallery to see new oil and watercolor landscape paintings by Mary Kay Niemiec, an Honor artist. 231-882-9370. 5-7pm.

Thursday, July 9

Beulah Music in the Park, featuring The Accidentals, a young indie folk band. Free family fun. Bring a chair or blanket. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 9

Benzonia Academy Lecture Series presents a Brief History of the Jones Act and the Maritime Academies by Admiral Jerry Achenbach. The Jones Act provides for the promotion and maintenance of the U.S. merchant marine and regulates commerce between U.S. ports. There are seven U.S. Maritime Academies, and a special emphasis will be put on The Great Lakes Maritime Academy in Traverse City. Admiral Achenbach, a 1986 graduate of State University of New York Maritime College, began his Coast Guard career in 1989 and completed many tours and assignments including Desert Storm support and commercial inspection services. In 2010, he retired from the Coast Guard, and in 2014 he became the Superintendent of the Great Lakes Maritime Academy. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. For information, please call 231-882-5539 or visit the Benzie Area Historical Society website at www.benziemuseum.org. Mills Community House in Benzonia. 7pm.

Friday, July 10

Periwinkle Garden Club walk. 10-11am.

Friday, July 10

Frankfort Music in the Park, featuring Saul Chandler, “One Man Band.” Mineral Springs Park. 231-352-7251. 7-8pm.

Friday, July 10

Benzie Community Chorus concert at Mills Community House. New director, new venue, still great music! Call 231-399-0155 for reservations. 7:30-9pm.

Friday, July 10 - Saturday, July 11

Benzonia Public Library’s annual used book sale! Friends preview sale on Friday from 4-6pm (\$5 membership sign-ups accepted at the door). Sale runs on Saturday from 9am-2pm for the general public. This is an easy sale to browse with a wide variety of items. Donations of good-quality books, audio books, and DVDs are accepted year round. 231-882-4111.

Saturday, July 11

Crystal Lake Township clean-up day at 2560 Benzonia Highway behind TriGas. Visit www.CrystalLakeTwp.org for more information. 8am-12pm.

Saturday, July 11

Benzie Household Hazardous Waste & Electronics Collection Appointments are required

for these collections. There is no charge for residents to dispose of household hazardous waste. These collections are funded by the Benzie County Recycling Program. Unfortunately, there may be a charge for some electronics due to changes in Michigan’s e-waste policy. Call 882-0554 for an appointment at the collection most convenient for you. 9am-12pm.

Saturday, July 11

Come out and visit Misty Acres, a beautiful 585-acre property encompassing a working farm, natural lands, and over one-mile stretch of the Betsei River. Hikers will learn how the agricultural and natural lands compliment each other, as well as about the history of the property and current work being done for its future. The hike will be approximately two miles in length. Please wear comfortable shoes and bring water. RSVP via dbroadway@gtrlc.org or call Drew Broadway 231.929.7911. Directions: <https://goo.gl/OMIFeg> 10am-12pm.

Saturday, July 11

45th Annual Beulah Art Fair. Original paintings, jewelry, pottery, graphics, crafts, sculpture, and photography. Rain or shine at the Village Park in Beulah. 231-499-4068. 10am-5pm.

Saturday, July 11

Manitou Winds will perform a mix of genres and ensemble combinations, even some polks, on the patio at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort. 4pm.

Saturday, July 11

Grow Benzie is delighted welcome singer/songwriter Robin Laing back to Michigan after a long absence for a concert. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. You can get tickets at The Bookstore in Frankfort, East Shore Market in Beulah, and Grow Benzie. 231-882-9510. 7:30pm.

Saturday, July 11 - Sunday, July 12

See the Michigan Legacy Art Park through the inspiring lens of the artist in residence, Nancy McKay, who will be creating art in the Art Park and engaging visitors in producing transformational art through the experience of being on the trail. She will guide people of all ages in finding the ‘stories’ within nature and the sculptures and developing themes that explore universal concepts (for example: joy, natural beauty, perseverance, hope, and peace). 231-378-4963.

Sunday, July 12

Couples’ Fun Night at Pinecroft Golf Course features nine holes of golf with potluck afterward. \$4 per couple. Non-member green fees are \$46 per couple. Please sign up at least 48 hours prior and bring a potluck dish, plus your own plate and utensils. 8260 Henry Road, Beulah. 231-882-3100. 3-7pm.

MORE EVENTS ONLINE!

[BENZIE-CALENDAR.COM](http://benzie-calendar.com)

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prime rib	7/11 Marsupials
fresh salad (winner green plate award)	7/17 Detroit Blues, David Gerald Trio
pizza	7/18 the Pochet
specialty burgers and sandwiches	7/24 Stella
	7/25 Dragon Wagon
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7/2 - Cousin Curtiss


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7/5 - Pistil Whips


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Hometown Giving

Give thoughtful gifts and support local causes

By Kelly Ottinger
Current Contributor

"Bob's Mom and Dad are downsizing and giving their things away, but he doesn't want to just ignore them over the holidays; what should he do?"

"Lisa's birthday is next week, but I don't know what to get her—really, she could afford anything she wants. I just need a way to show that I care about what's important to her."

"Wow, I hate that the hardware store closed downtown. I guess it's too tough to compete with the bigger chain stores these days."

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a *gift* as: "Something given freely, with no expectation of return." Perhaps unspoken is the thought that people want the gifts they give to make others happy; they want their gifts to show that they know and honor the people who are receiving them. Ours is a gift-driven culture, and Americans are notoriously generous, taking great pleasure in giving gifts to others. We give gifts for birthdays, religious holidays, graduations, house-warmings, retirements, new babies, romantic gestures, and many times for no reason at all. Even in a society saturated with *stuff*, we struggle—but still try—to find "that perfect gift" for each occasion.

That perfect gift used to be readily available just down the street, no matter where folks lived. Small towns—and even larger towns with neighborhood retail areas—offered an assortment of shops where customers could find both life's necessities and the little luxuries. For many years, however, the landscape of the local shopping scene has been changing drastically. Those who remember living during a time when shopping needs were met locally have become almost numb to the number of mom-and-pop businesses that continue to close their doors. Michael, Jonathan, and Cameron Clark remember the time of local merchants very well. Years ago, their parents owned specialty men's and women's clothing shops in downtown Beulah. One of those shops was the same location as the present-day L'Chayim Delicatessen, owned by Jonathan. (L'Chayim has since expanded and opened a deli in Frankfort, as well.)

While Jonathan celebrates his Northern Michigan roots by operating a successful business where his parents once did, his brothers Michael and Cameron have taken a different path. Last November, they established "Hometown Giving," a website that champions both local businesses and area nonprofits in Benzie and surrounding counties. Giving gifts has never been easier, particularly when done through the website www.HomeTownGiving.com. For example, if Bob wants to give his parents an anniversary gift worth \$100, he logs on to the website and creates an account. Under the "Give a Gift" tab, he types in the amount he wants to give, plus the recipient's name and email address. There is even a place for Bob to

redeem their gift certificates for a restaurant and a nonprofit that are close by. "We wanted to not only promote local business—because it's so hard for them to compete with big-box chain stores—but we also wanted to provide a way for people to become aware of and support their local charities," Cameron says. "Nonprofit organizations exist to help people. But all too often, they are forced to spend their time and resources raising operating capital. We wanted to offer a way for people to support these agencies and free them to do the work they intended to do." Registration with Hometown Giving is free for nonprofit organizations and done through a quick online application process. For \$75 per year, area businesses can register on the website, too. Additionally, during the initial registration process, \$25 of the fee is donated to that business's charity of choice.

The Clarks are reaching out to local businesses and nonprofits they are most familiar with—Michigan's northwest corridor—with the goal to saturate that market by the end of this year. In the future, they plan to expand Hometown Giving throughout Michigan and eventually take it nationwide. For now, if you scroll to the bottom of the website, there is a list of "hometowns" to choose from: Benzonia, Beulah, Elk Rapids, Frankfort, Honor, Kaleva, Manistee, Thompsonville, and Traverse



Sally Berlin (far left) of Crystal Crate & Cargo, Kitty Ely of Northern Decor, and Jonathan Clark (far right) of L'Chayim all participate in Hometown Giving, a project created by Cameron Clark (middle). Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

City. Click on a hometown to see which businesses and nonprofits are located in that area and participating in the program—everything from the Benzie Central Gridiron Club to Hilltop Soda Shoppe to Grow Benzie. Even brother Jonathan's L'Chayim Delicatessen is listed among the businesses in Beulah's list. "We are trying to grow thoughtfully and cover the bases carefully during the process," Cameron explains. "We don't want the growth to happen in an out-of-control fashion, which it easily could." The Clark brothers welcome all small businesses and any nonprofits in the area to apply. In keeping with that spirit, big-box stores and chain establishments need not apply. "We are about keeping dollars local and helping small business owners generate the income needed to live and prosper," Cameron says. Businesses interested in registering with Hometown Giving can access the application by visiting www.HomeTownGiving.com/business-sign-up. Nonprofits may register on the website through www.HomeTownGiving.com/charity-sign-up. You can also visit on [fb.me/1GI6AU5](https://www.facebook.com/1GI6AU5) to follow Hometown Giving on Facebook.

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Dreams

Continued from page 1

season—Lake Ann Grocery, those Casino gals, and Geno’s, to name a couple.

I’m lucky enough to have witnessed a few different eras of softball in the area. My family has always played ball—Ma has played since before I was born; Pops has played and coached for quite some time; my three older brothers and I all watched them when we were too little to hold a bat, then we played throughout our childhood,

every aspect of organizing the teams, umpiring the games, and manicuring the fields so that more than 100 players can show up each night, with friends and family in tow, to have a good time and play ball.

Frank Walterhouse, a retired Homestead Township commissioner who is over 70, is a softball staple who still to this day runs the field and keeps score, sounding the horn for every home run in Honor. He and so many others speak to the heritage that comes with Honor ball.

What remains the same, season after season? The tradition of playing ball.



Playing baseball in Benzonia. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

and now we’re continuing on into our adulthood, too.

These days, Ma and Pops come to watch our game nights, and we’re lucky enough to compete with a couple players who are still out there from their playing days.

Above all of the entertainment that comes from watching endless innings, however, nothing compares to the joy of the kids—and the adults—themselves who are out there playing: pitching to each other, running bases, and chasing home-run balls that have been hit over the fence.

Our community is fortunate to have dedicated folks that keep all of the leagues—from T-ball to Over-40—rolling with ease. It is a volunteered commitment to manage

Find the Over-40 League on Mondays at Memorial Park behind Watson Benzie car dealership in Benzonia. The Men’s League is in Honor on the hill behind Platte River Elementary on Tuesdays, and the Women’s League is there on Thursdays. On Fridays, the Co-Ed League is in Thompsonville. There are also those who play in nearby Traverse City or Cedar Tuesday through Friday, and on the weekends you can always find a tournament—usually Co-Ed—within an hour of home and always benefiting a great cause. (And don’t let the season fool you, since there are the infamous February Snowball Tournaments where you can find us playing with a ‘big’ ball in one to three feet of snow!)

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The Betsie Current

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SUP?

Continued from page 1

Great Lakes, and they're making this trip to raise awareness."

Gary Guy, father of Jeff, admits that he and his wife didn't always support this effort.

"When Jeff first started talking about it last year, we were really kinda against it," Gary says. "We asked 'Why would you want to try something like this?' But the more we thought about it, we realized he's a strong young man, and it's a great cause."

Gary explained that he and his wife wanted to make sure that the guys were really well prepared and had thought about all of the possible situations that might happen. In the end, he said that they were relieved to have three support boats rather than just one.

"It was really good to get up this morning and see the boats within sight," Gary goes on. "We were pretty concerned about the guys, paddling through the night. The water is still pretty cold, in the 30s. It's really a relief to see them. I'm excited to see them finish up; I'm really proud of my son and all the young men making this trip."

"Seeing my son come over the horizon makes me feel pride and relief," adds a beaming Greg Morris. "I think they're doing a great job all the way around. They've done a lot to try and raise awareness for a good cause. I'm pretty proud of all of them, but my son Kwin especially."

It wasn't just parents who were waiting on the shore—other family members, television news crews, local dignitaries, vacationing visitors, and Frankfort residents all stood peering at the boats that were growing larger and larger as they came toward the harbor. Dan Guy from Traverse City could barely hold the leash of his excited dog, Heli.

"My brother Jeff is paddling out there," Dan says. "We've been here on the Frankfort beach waiting to see the boats, watching them get bigger. Hopefully the paddlers are all healthy and doing well out there. When they first started talking about doing this, I told them that they were crazy, especially paddling at night. Over the past couple of years, they've trained really hard for this; they've taken it very seriously. They've tested all different kinds of gear and set-ups on their boards. It's been pretty cool to see the transformation—I'm really proud of them. I'd compare their accomplishment to doing two to three marathons in a row."

In addition to the crew aboard the three-boat entourage, a video production crew from Ford Motor Company sponsored the trip and documented it as part of the company's "Go Further" campaign, according to *The Ticker*.

Kathleen Alexander, movie producer for the Ford Foundation's "Go Further" series, documented every stroke of the way.

"After being on this lake for 27 hours with these guys, I felt their amazing love for this body of water; their passion about where they

live and what this lake means to them," she says. "As a producer and a filmmaker, it was just a delight and a treat to be involved with these men. It took them a long time to put this together. It took them a lot of training. They just kept on it, thinking, 'How do we go about this?' and 'How do we go about that?' They were determined to make it all the way to the end, together. They set the rhythm of stopping every hour to take a rest, but basically they would get next to each other and talk with each other, to ask, 'Hey, how are you doing?'"

She continued that the team was constantly checking on the men from the boat.

"The nighttime was especially hard; it was really cold and really hard to see," she continues. "They had a great group mindset—lots of jokes and bets between them, like 'Who is going to fall off first?' They all went into it with their own personal goals and a group goal, so they should be so proud of themselves. It was a great privilege to be a part of it."

The participants were all experienced paddleboarders who wanted to take on a challenge that had a high profile in order to garner a lot of attention for the Great Lakes—a feat certainly accomplished, based on the size of the group waiting for them on shore and the press that the story has received since.

At age 83, Sue Luedtke may have been the most seasoned person waiting at the harbor for the paddlers.

"The Great Lakes are important to me because my husband made his living putting in docks and breakwaters as an engineer on the Great Lakes," she says. "His family came from Wisconsin in the 1930s to get work dredging in the lake. The Great Lakes are perfect. They're wonderful; they're so clean and available. They need to be protected, so we keep the lake like it is forever."

Adrian Reed, Sue's attendant, gestured toward the vast expanse of the sparkling lake.

"The Lakes are so pure and so rare," Reed says. "We can build things like amusement parks, but you can't build this."

Jeff Guy's co-worker, Patrick Kolody voiced admiration as he saw the paddlers appear in the harbor.

"The sport has exploded," Patrick says. "And [Jeff] and his friends have taken this to the next level to raise money for the Great Lakes because they have a passion for the environment and for the water. We live in a very special area."

Among the throng of spectators was Joshua Mills, superintendent for the City of Frankfort, and JoAnn Holwerda, Frankfort Mayor Pro-Temps.

"We're here to greet the paddlers on behalf of the city," Holwerda says. "It's awesome to see all of these people here."

"It's a wonderful feat that these men are trying to accomplish," Mills adds. "Their passion is exactly aligned with our passion, which is to preserve this natural asset. This beach is not just for this community but for all to enjoy. Together we have to be proactive to allow this to be available for future generations."

David Lyden from *9&10 News* stood perched on the dunes above the beach to cap-

ture the group's arrival.

"We're here because this is a positive story about some people in Northern Michigan doing something really cool today," Lyden says. "It's not every day that you hear about people paddling through the night from Wisconsin to cross Lake Michigan—I think these five guys are prime examples of what makes Northern Michigan special."

For 27 hours, the paddlers had battled the frigid water and stiff crosswind to reach Michigan from Wisconsin. Though the men all had worn dry suits and protective footgear, post-sunset air temperatures had been in the 40s and the water temperature had hovered around 38, according to *The Ticker*.

Around noon, the three support boats remained outside the harbor as the five exhausted paddlers rounded the Frankfort lighthouse. They entered the harbor in a staggered line, but then lined themselves up five-abreast to make their landing in a unified wave as the waiting crowd brought them ashore with wild cheering and hooting. The paddlers jumped off their boards and ran into the arms of loved ones. Relief, pride, gratitude, and happiness reverberated in the air.

"I feel amazing, accomplishing something that we've been planning for such a long time," says paddler Kwin Morris, who couldn't stop smiling. "That was tough, that was really tough. Cold weather; we were freezing, close to hypothermia. We warded it off by keeping moving. The weather wasn't what was forecasted. We needed west wind, but there was a lot of headwind—it was awesome."

"I'll remember this forever," says an emotional J. Mueller. "I'm glad I did this with my good friends."

"We made the crossing without ever touching the support boats," exclaims a proud Joe Lorenz. "Except for the one time when one of the guys got seasick, and we had to hand some nausea medicine to him up on the boat."

Joe went on to explain how the paddlers kept themselves fueled to maintain body heat and to fight the constant exertion, taking 10-minute breaks every hour to eat and drink warm tea.

"I'd eat a little bit, wait for my stomach to stop being upset from eating while working so hard, then eat a little more," he says. "We were burning about 3,000 calories an hour."

Yvonne Lorenz says of her son, Joe, and his comrades, "He's a warrior; they're all warriors."

Perhaps exactly the sort of warriors our precious Great Lakes need.

Alliance for the Great Lakes works with scientists, policymakers, businesses, community groups, and everyday citizens to protect and restore the world's largest freshwater resource. More than 80 percent of the organization's funds go toward programs that safeguard the lakes. For more information, visit GreatLakes.org. Though the event has passed, you can still donate money to the cause at bit.ly/1LuZKIU, and you can get updates by visiting StandUpforGreatLakes.com and Facebook. com/StandUpforGreatLakes.

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The Rhythm of the Rails

Rebirthing train travel to Northern Michigan

By Norm Wheeler
Current Contributor

The lanky, loquacious locomotive conductor with his throwback uniform and shiny brimmed hat calls out to everyone in the Amtrak waiting lounge in Chicago’s Union Station, “The choo-choo train is ready for boarding, everybody! If you have your ticket ready to ride the Empire Builder, follow me through that door to track Number 1!”

It could be a taping for the Choo-Choo Bob T.V. show in St. Paul, but no, I’ll really be riding that train. Because of the notoriously fickle finger of fate at O’Hare Airport, Spirit Air has cancelled both flights to St. Paul. My travel-savvy daughter fetched me a refund, and my thumb-quick son promptly iPhoned her a link that she translated into a ticket on today’s afternoon Amtrak to the Twin Cities in a sleeper car. When I get off, somebody from St. Paul will get on and truly use it for sleeping. Woot woot!

The carpeted lounge at Union Station is full of big soft chairs and relaxed folks. A few grandparents follow around toddlers who are harnessed to long red leashes so they won’t disappear into the crowd. The vibe is warmer and less frenetic than an airport boarding gate, even though the lounge is full. Many passengers will be sleeping in a berth all night as the tall, silver Empire Builder slithers across the northern Great Plains to Seattle. It is going to take some time, so both patience and anticipation are palpable.

Having crisscrossed Europe on passenger trains in the 1970s, this is my first ride through my homeland. Room 3 has soft facing chairs that can slide together into a berth and a pull-down bed is braced to the ceiling above. The brick neighborhoods of Chicago slide backward past the window, and the subtle metronome of steel wheels on rails creates a click track that taps a pulse for the rest of the day. Arlo Guthrie’s version of “City of New Orleans”—written by Chicagoan Steve Goodman—earworms gently through my head. “The rhythm of the rails is all they feel...”

The changing landscape is everything. You see both the automobile-congested present and the last century’s pastoral past scroll by. The train parallels the super highway up to Milwaukee; the lumbering semis and swarming SUVs busier and faster than you are, the strip malls hurrying to hurl us all more stuff. But entering the bratwurst capital through its older neighborhoods, you see boarded-up old brick breweries, hundred-year-old grain silos, the pocked cement of crumbling bridges, and painted signs from other times. Stopping at the terminal in Milwaukee, you can look out

at the clapboard garages and parking lots behind the buildings that line some unseen street to see a back wall black sign saying, “Shoe Polish.”

The old tracks that wind through Wisconsin are festooned with abandoned phone lines. Countless tar-stained poles hold three or four cross trees each. On each horizontal brace are rows of old green glass insulators, shaped like chessboard pawns. Hundreds of miles of wire still droop and dangle from those poles, some now buried in the thickets of trees that have grown up, around, and through them. At the newer crossroads, the cut wires hang their heads only to climb back onto the poles on the other side. (Aren’t those wires copper? There must be a fortune there, if you could just untangle everything and then sell it to China!)

You notice how rough the graffiti-stamped bridges are under the roads beside the tracks, and you see backlots behind steel-sided pole barn factories and warehouses with their huge spools of thick wire, scaffolds with racks of lumber and re-rod, and rows of yellow earth-movers on gigantic black tires.

By the Wisconsin Dells, there are great hills of yellow sand with conveyors snaking along above them. This harvest feeds the oil industry’s extraction needs in North Dakota,

boxcars of Woody Guthrie and the hoboes. We eat pretty good food in shifts in the Dining Car, and the Lounge Car is full of folks facing the windows to see the shiny, wide

ribbon of the Mississippi River pass under the skinny bridge and then glitter alongside as the silver train slides through the Minnesota twilight. As we pull into St. Paul’s stunning Union Depot, folks gather at the doors to disembark with me, or to get one more leg stretch or hit of tobacco before the Empire Builder tucks into its long sleeping ride through the western night.

To ride the cross-country train is to experience a more civilized, more relaxed, less herd-

like mode of travel. You can move around; the combination of proximity and long, narrow space encourages you to meet and talk with your fellow travellers. The land you pass through is like a movie of incomparable beauty and infinite variety. You may hear the song in your head morph into, “This land is your land, this land is my land...”

We need to rebirth train travel here in Michigan. The rails and the backlots are still here. And the will to do so is emerging, thanks to the leadership of the local Groundwork Center (formerly the Michigan Land Use Institute, founded in Beulah and now located on Front Street in Traverse City). They have a plan to connect Traverse City to Ann Arbor, with stops in Cadillac, Mt. Pleasant, Alma, Owosso, and Howell. This is a great idea. Let’s all spread the re-appearing railroad news. Here are some details from the Groundwork Center:

“Re-establishing passenger rail service between two of Michigan’s most vibrant cities—Ann Arbor and Traverse City—will link the resource-rich tourist destinations in the northwest and the economic and population centers in the southeast. This investment will solidify Michigan as a leader in a new era of modern train travel, while boosting economic development along the corridor. The Groundwork Center believes that bringing passenger rail service back to Northern Michigan is possible in less than a decade with a focused campaign of public engagement, technical analysis, and adequate support from a cross section of community, state, and federal agencies.”

Why TC to Ann Arbor?

- The tracks are still in place, and they’re still owned by the state. Often the most expensive part of a transportation project is the cost of buying land and laying new tracks.
- The tracks are in pretty good shape: 90 percent of the tracks are ready for passenger service, and more than half allow passenger trains to travel nearly 60 miles per hour. Only small sections require investment.
- There’s overwhelming enthusiasm and support from the public for this idea. The number one priority that came out of a statewide rail-planning process in 2011 was a passenger connection to Traverse City. In fact, more people attended the Traverse City forum than anywhere else in the state.



In olden days, trains brought passengers straight to the Frankfort beach. Photo courtesy of the Bob McCall collection.

my supper mate tells me in the animated dining car. He is going back to work there after an unwanted six-month vacation since the Saudis lowered the price of oil, glutted the market, and interrupted the U.S. production pace. These rails still nourish the domestic gross national product, as long trains of enormous freight cars suddenly whoosh by the window on a scale that dwarfs the quaint

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Shoot-out in the Ghost Town of Aral

History of a double murder

By Linda Beaty
Current Contributor

Ghost towns—sometimes called “boom-towns”—exist throughout the world. These formerly bustling communities were often built up around a natural resource, such as gold, and were abandoned when the resource was depleted.

But while most people are aware of Western ghost towns such as California’s Tombstone or Bodie, fewer people know that Northern Michigan is host to some interesting ghost towns, too, built not upon gold but upon “green gold,” or the timber that made our state the nation’s leading lumber producer during the second half of the 19th century.

By 1850, the federal government was in a predicament. Rich in vast tracts of land, there was little cash reserve to pay debts. It sought to alleviate the situation through the “Swamp Land Act,” which ceded unusable land due to swamps—even marshes or intermittent ponds—to state governments, allowing them to sell the land to speculators who wanted to establish commerce for as little as \$0.75 to \$1.50 per acre.

And so the timber rush began. Lumber barons, who had already seen the forests depleted in eastern states such as Maine, began to battle for Michigan’s land. What property could not be purchased legally was acquired through more nefarious means. For instance, the Homestead Act of 1862, signed by Abraham Lincoln, allowed any homesteader who was 21 years of age and not in trouble with the government to lay claim to 160 acres of land, as long as he developed the property; the lumber barons were not above hiring bogus homesteaders to claim their plot and stay until the timber on it was cut.

All of this wooding excitement revolved primarily upon Michigan’s white pine, which was used to build houses, barns, fences, buggies, and more. Nicknamed “cork,” it was an ideal source of lumber because it grew straight and tall, with the oldest specimens 200 to 300

years of age, 200 feet tall, and up to 8 feet in diameter. When felled, the pine logs were buoyant, making them easy to float down the river to the sawmill, and they yielded more usable lumber per acre than other soft woods. A \$1.50 purchase of land could bring in more than \$75 of lumber, which was a lot of money on those days.

Numerous logging settlements built up in Michigan during the mid-1800s, with “shanty boys” (lumberjacks) hired to work camps for \$1.50 to \$2 pay for a 14-hour day. Much of the labor was done during the winter, because the logs were easily hauled to the banks of the frozen rivers by horse-drawn sleds where they were held until the spring thaw, then floated down-river to retention ponds and lifted up to sawmills for processing. For many, the job—which entailed backbreaking work and nights in a bunkhouse, strewn with other sweaty, lice-infested men—was a means to earn enough money to establish a farm of their own.

Aral was a logging settlement with a colorful history, largely because it witnessed one of the area’s few pioneer shootouts. Aral is located four miles south of Empire along M-22 at the end of Esch Road, where Otter Creek empties into Lake Michigan. Today it’s one of the most popular swimming beaches in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and offers few signs of its colorful past, when Aral was a thriving wooding town.

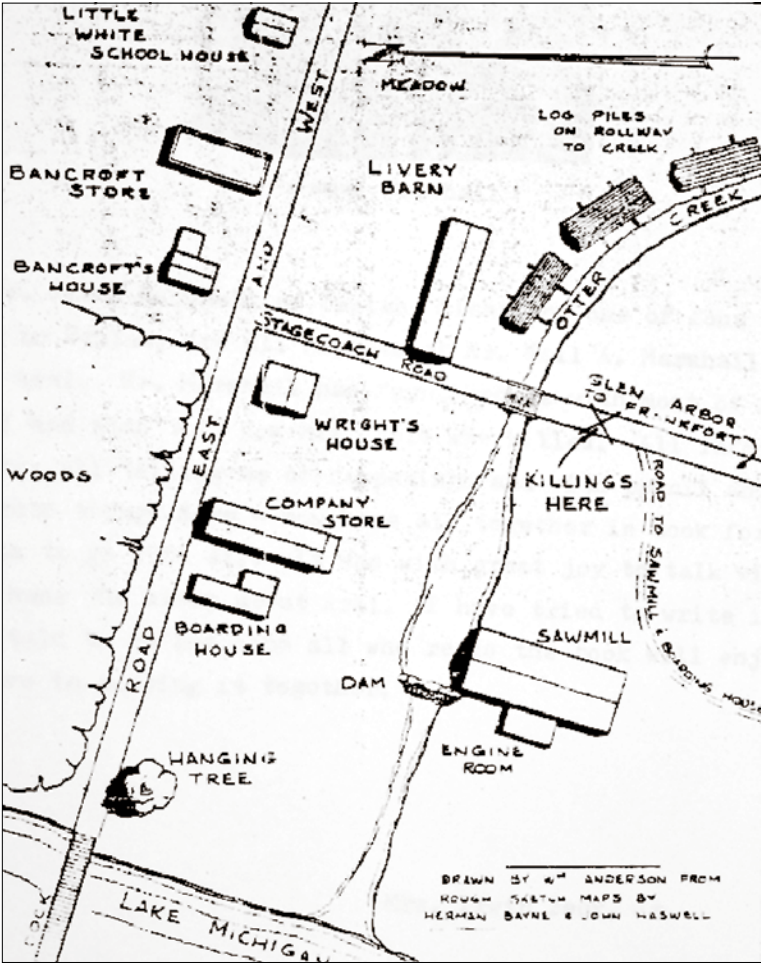
Aral’s history dates to 1853, when a surveyor named Orange Risdon from Saline, Michigan, was assigned to perform federal surveys in Northern Michigan; surveys which were required by the government prior to releasing land for individual purchase. Apparently he liked what he saw of the mouth of Otter Creek, because soon after the survey was completed, he and his wife Sally purchased 122 acres there.

The acreage was sold a little over a decade later to Robert F. Bancroft, who served in the Civil War as a photographer. Bancroft had little in mind except a quiet place to live; he cleared 20 acres of his new land, built a log cabin on it, and surrounded the cabin with black locust trees and an apple orchard.

But lumber speculators soon changed all that. As forests near Grand Haven and Muskegon were nearing the end of harvesting, they went looking for other stands of white pine and found several, inland from Otter Lake. Soon, Dr. Arthur O’Leary—an Irishman from Wisconsin with little experience in the lumber business—bought large tracts of this forest and began planning his operation. By 1881, the creek had been dammed to create a millpond in front of a newly built two-story sawmill, where the logs could be lifted up to be cut. A boarding house for the lumberjacks and horse barns for the camp horses had been erected, and a dock for loading the wood onto ships was built on Bancroft’s property on Lake Michigan, just north of Otter Creek. The milling operation commenced that year.

Aral grew larger as a result of the booming lumber business. A post office was built in 1883, at which time the community had to decide upon a town name. The logical choice was “Otter Creek,” as it was known to its inhabitants, but both this name as well as “Bancroft,” after Aral’s first resident, had already been given to other communities in Michigan. A sawmill worker suggested the name “Aral” after the large and salty Aral Sea in Central Asia, and the name stuck, although locals still called their community Otter Creek. Frank Thurber, a local physician and township treasurer, was appointed the first postmaster.

By 1886, the town boasted a population of



Map of Aral circa 1890. Courtesy of the National Park Service.

about 200. In addition to the post office, Aral had a second boarding house, a schoolhouse, a church which also served as a meeting hall, and a general store. O’Leary had leased the mill to Charles T. Wright, an experienced lumberman from Wisconsin. As the pine stands were depleted, Wright—who had commuted for a time between Wisconsin and Michigan but now owned a house across from Robert Bancroft—kept the mill busy with processing hardwoods and turning out lumber that was used for flooring, furniture, railroad ties, and fence posts.

Wright had a head for business, but he also had a bad temper and was known to throw a few punches in the heat of an argument. In 1889, the taxes on the Aral sawmill had escalated to a rate that he considered unreasonable, so he refused to pay his taxes for that year. County Sheriff A.B. Case responded by requesting treasurer Dr. Thurber to issue a writ of attachment to apply to the mill yard’s logs, an action which would shut down Wright’s operation and force him to pay his taxes.

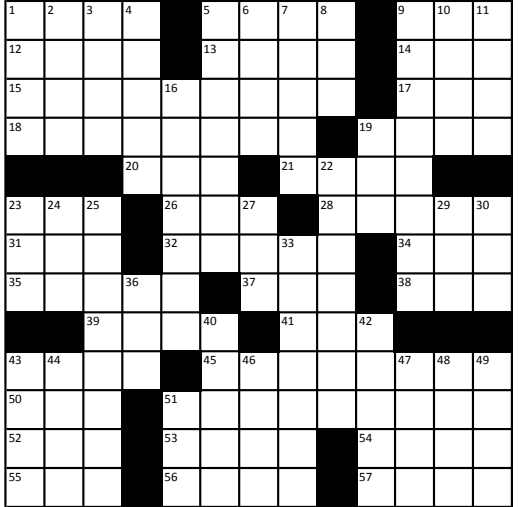
On August 10, 1889, Deputy Sheriff Neil Marshall was sent to Aral to implement the writ. Wright, who had been alerted to the arrival of the deputy, took his rifle to the creek and instructed his crew to begin rolling logs into the water. When Marshall arrived, a confrontation ensued, but Wright’s men were directed by their boss to keep working, so Marshall went to the hotel for dinner and to seek out Dr. Thurber’s assistance. The two men returned about 2:30 pm, and again, Wright was alerted of the visitors, but this time was waiting with gun in hand when

Across

1. Patriotic eagle
5. Trolley
9. Mischievous child
12. Pierre’s female friend
13. Cloud at the edge of the Solar System
14. Try to win over
15. Declaration of Independence author
17. Leslie’s BFF on “Parks and Recreation”
18. Broadcasting towers
19. Hitch in a plan
20. TV brand
21. Radiate
23. Bird that lays green eggs
26. “___ to Joy”
28. 1989 James Cameron flick (with “The”)
31. Saturn compact
32. Flowers for Valentines
34. Three strikes, say
35. Cranny
37. “___ my shorts!”
38. Someone Brad Ausmus argues with
39. Tilt
41. Dream sleep, briefly
43. Voicemail sound
45. Songs near the ends of musicals
50. Possessive pronoun
51. Star of 1996 blockbuster “Independence Day”
52. Org. whose docs Snowden leaked
53. Org. co-founded by Helen Keller
54. Inventor Rubik
55. Place to shoot hoops
56. Surfboard fin
57. Candidate’s goal, perhaps

Down

1. Mexican peninsula, familiarly
2. “You said it, brother!”
3. Elevator, to Will and Kate
4. Put off
5. Phenomenon rated on Fujita scale
6. Famous bus rider
7. Got up
8. Peak (abbr.)
9. Famous patriotic phrase of 25-Down
10. ___ Lisa
11. Classic video game
15. Crowd pleasers
19. Sis or Bro
22. Golf Tournament at Augusta
23. How Germans start counting
24. Miss Piggy, to Miss Piggy
25. See 9-Down
27. Direction from Sleeping Bear Dunes to Traverse City
29. Total
30. Oil brand that sponsored Richard Petty
33. Rock concert accessory
36. With it
40. Hoodwink
42. Plays charades
43. Dark red cherry
44. Online crafts market
46. Fashion magazine
47. Father a foal
48. Italian volcano
49. Beyond repair
51. “And She ___” (Talking Heads tune)



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By Eliza Prager and Dan Flanagan,
exclusively for *The Betsie Current*.

they arrived.

After a brief struggle between Wright and Marshall, Wright fired the rifle, killing Marshall instantly. Thurber then tried to wrestle the rifle from Wright and succeeded, only to see Wright pull a revolver from his pocket. Thurber was shot once in the head and again in the chest, and he, too, died. The mill continued to operate for a short while after the double murder, but soon Wright became anxious and shut it down, paying the men for their work and hiding himself in the woods.

By evening, the local prosecuting attorney, George Covell, had learned by wire of the murders and was headed from Frankfort to Aral by steamer, along with a posse of men and the newspaper editor and photographer. A large, angry crowd had gathered around the mill by that time, and when the posse arrived, many helped to search for Wright—to no avail. But it was suspected that one person knew about his whereabouts: Lahala, an Indian employee. The crowd tied a rope around Lahala’s neck and attached the other end over the branch of a pine tree, threatening to hang him if he didn’t reveal what he knew. After several lifts from the ground, Lahala spoke. Wright was captured and convicted of two counts of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment at Jackson, Michigan.

The mill continued running with a new operator, but it burned down in 1899, a suspected arson. And by 1904, the entire community—with the exception of the Bancroft family—had left and Aral’s post office had closed.

A new group arrived in Aral in 1908 and briefly revived the town; this was a communal, celibate, religious group called the Israelite House of David, known for their long beards, their red-suited band (which played on their schooner named *The Rising Sun*), and their baseball team, reputed to be the best in the area. The group rebuilt the sawmill, and for the next three years of the declining lumber era, they harvested the remaining forest. When the timber was gone, so was the House of David, leaving only the Bancrofts in Aral until they, too, left in 1922.

As for Wright? He served only 10 years of time, working as a bookkeeper in the prison’s office. For reasons unknown, his sentence was commuted by Michigan Governor Hazen S. Pingree, and he returned to Aral for his former wife, who had since divorced him and remarried. There are several versions as to how he won her back, but that is another story.

In the woods just off the parking lot at Esch Road beach, there is a historical marker with a few photos that describes some of the history of Aral. Local writer Anne-Marie Oomen’s 1998 play Aral: A Folk Opera recreates the Charles Wright double murder and the waning days of Aral’s lumber boom. Read about Aral: A Folk Opera in the online archives of our sister publication at GlenArborSun.com. The following books also recount the story of Aral: Ghost Towns of Michigan Volume I by Larry Wakefield; Ghost Towns, a publication of Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes; 100 Years in Leelanau by Edmund M. Littell, and The Logging Era: Period of Graft and Exploitation by Dave Warner.



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Part II: The Betsie Valley Trail from River Road Trailhead

Nicole Bates
Current Contributor

Last time, we explored the uninterrupted three miles of Betsie Valley Trail from Elberta to the crossing at River Road. Only a few minutes from town by car, the next section—which extends from River Road to M-115—is ideal for nature lovers!

Parking is available at the small dirt lot near the corner of River Road and Adams Road. Kayakers and fishermen also use this parking lot since there is a nice access point to the Betsie River. Once on the paved trail, the winding path follows the Betsie River for about a mile, then turns and takes you through peaceful rolling hardwood forests toward Crystal Lake.

This is my favorite part of the paved trail, and my son loves it as well. We call it the Turtle Trail, because small ponds to the left of the trail are full of turtles who greet us on sunny days from their perches atop warm logs. (I was even lucky enough to spot a giant snapper who resides in the area—from a safe distance.) It’s not just turtles though: birds serenade us, and squirrels cavort through the underbrush.

The trail itself is smooth, flat, and fast, which makes it easy for strollers and bikers of all skill levels. It’s a great spot for the whole family—I can run, my husband can walk, either of us can push the baby in the stroller, and my son can ride his bike. Even the dogs are welcome on a leash, but bring your own doggie bags. The best part is that this section of trail is short enough that we don’t feel too spread out, regardless of our own individual pace.

There is an outhouse at the River Road access point—always a bonus—but no water aside from the river, which your dog might like to drink, but you probably shouldn’t. If running with kids, be aware that M-115 is a very busy road. There are caution signs as you approach.

If you’re doing a short run, the intersection is a great turn-around point for a total of

three miles. For those who want to keep going, the pavement continues between M-115 and Mollineaux Road (this whole section is visible as you wait to cross M-115). After Mollineaux Road, however, the surface changes from pavement to hard-packed dirt and gravel. (Also note that dogs are not allowed past the Mollineaux Road access.)



Snapping turtle off the Betsie Valley Trail. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Stay tuned for the next of this series, which will take us on a trail run around Otter Lake. You can learn more about the Betsie Valley Trail online at BetsieValleyTrail.org. Do you have a favorite Benzie County trail? Go to *The Betsie Current* on Facebook and share a picture from your favorite route.




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