

## Wildest of the Wild Things

The collector and creator behind Monumental Finds

By Susan Koenig  
Current Contributor

Driving down the Gateway hill into Frankfort, one of the first things that visitors see is a rooftop labeled “ANTIQUES” sitting next to the Shell gas station and across the street from the A&W. But what’s inside is so much more than 100-year-old furniture, fine china, or brass doorknobs. (Though you’re likely to find these, too.)

Monumental Finds, which occupies a 1,200-square-foot space that was once an appliance store and later a Sears Catalogue business, is full of fun treasures. An eclectic array of strange, colorful art pieces — made with scrap pieces of this or that — is mixed in with antiques and collectibles that have never been refinished.

Sitting upon a vintage coffee table, an old stump has come to life with pool balls for eyes

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Wild things abound at Monumental Finds in Frankfort. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

## From the Rubble

Polishing a new gem in Frankfort

By Jordan Bates  
Current Editor

Michigan was once covered in shallow tropical seas, until the continental plates moved and shifted our region up from the equator towards the 45th parallel. The seas dried, and the sealife died. The coral fossilized and lay buried for about 350 million years (plus or minus a few million), when the glaciers came, tore up the fossilized sea floor, and ground the fossils into boulders and rocks. When the glaciers retreated and left behind the Great Lakes, they also left behind the fossilized coral, now imprinted onto rock. When dry, they are invisible to the untrained eye; when wet, a delightful treasure to be found — Petoskey stones.

Also to be found along the shoreline in this region, another accidental “gem.” Leftover from the days when Northern Michigan was

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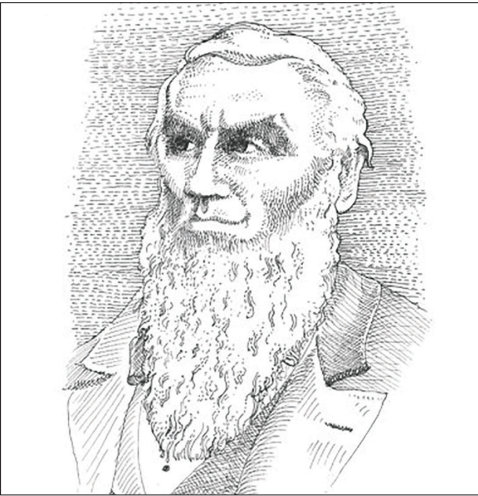
Andy Higgins takes a break from polishing stones. Photo by Jordan Bates.

## Who Pulled the Plug at Crystal Lake?

Details of the Tragedy... err, Comedy

By Stacy L. Daniels  
Current Contributor

Archibald Jones founded the Benzie County River Improvement Co. in 1873 with the intention of improving water lots on Crystal Lake, removing obstructions between Crystal Lake and Lake Michigan, and building a steamboat to facilitate the shipment of settlers and goods to and from the interior of the county to the nearby port of Frankfort. The dramatic lowering of a very large inland lake by 20 feet and the creation of a 21-mile perimeter of sandy beach ensured the future of Crystal Lake as a prime recreational area. It is unique in the histories of Michigan’s inland lakes, and it is still to this day one of the most spectacular and long-lasting river-improvement projects of its time.



Archibald Jones (9/14/1811-5/15/1890). Original ink drawing by Glenn Wolff, 2014, based on a photograph portrait that appeared in the Benzie Banner.

The role of Archibald Jones, the man who (allegedly) pulled the plug at Crystal Lake, involved travels of a typical 1800s American family, searching for opportunities, experiencing adventures, and facing vicissitudes posed by the opening of the Midwest. The lowering of Crystal Lake has elements of both tragedy and comedy — a serious beginning with a happy ending, as well as perceived foibles of human nature and realized unintended consequences associated with bold ventures.

Archibald Jones was a true entrepreneur. He was a farmer, horse trader, carriage maker, fruit grower, estate overseer, cattle rancher, and eventually even a canal builder, as this tale goes. He moved progressively with his wife and eight children from New York to Ohio to southwest Michigan to northwest Michigan (and later, on to Illinois and Kansas). He was

a “bootstrap engineer,” having worked on the Erie Canal as a young man. As a result of a chance encounter with the Reverend James B. Walker, one of the founders of the Benzonia Colony, he came north to form the Benzie County River Improvement Co. A series of canals were proposed to connect Crystal Lake from the Platte River to the Betsie River and on to Lake Michigan.

Peculiar to Michigan at the time were needs to improve the land-locked entrances of drowned river mouths along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan by creating “harbors of refuge” for shipping and inland waterways for accessing the interior of the state. Many natural river outlets were straightened and new channels were dredged to navigable

Please see Jones on page 6

## Walking on Water

Popular new sport crests a wave

By Elysha Rom-Povolo  
Current Contributor

If you’ve visited the beach in the last few summers, you’ve likely seen stand-up paddle boarders. With unique silhouettes reminiscent of walking on water, the sport is adding to the already beautiful lake views.

But what’s the trend all about? “I like to look down into the water,” says Kate Easlick, a Benzonia resident who has been stand-up paddle boarding for several years. She got into it as an alternative to kayaking. “This was a thing you could stand up on and use your whole body with.”

While Easlick enjoys the sport at least once a week during the summer, there are also many who are just learning it for the first time now. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, last year, stand-up paddle boarding had the most first-time participants of any

sport. However, that wasn’t always the case.

Nancy and Larry Bordine have been crafting, renting, and selling stand-up paddle boards for years at the Beach Nut Surf Shop in downtown Frankfort.

Larry moved to Michigan in the 1980s from Southern California, where he spent his time surfing and skateboarding.



David Kadlec shows advanced stand-up paddle boarding skills. Photo by Keenan May.

He had a hunch that he could create a board to stand up and row on in Lake Michigan, and after spending some time putting his degree from the Maritime Academy to use by working to craft something of his own design, Larry found a community that was already making them. Larry made his first board in 2006, and the couple opened the store in 2010.

Now, for nearly a decade, the Bordines have watched the sport steadily take off in the region.

“When we first started, we’d go all over the Traverse Bay area,” Nancy says. “Everywhere we went, people would ask us, ‘What is that!?’”

In fact, it was such a novelty in years past that, during the Gover-

Please see SUP on page 2



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OF FRANKFORT, MI

# SUP

Continued from page 1

nor’s Convention in Traverse City in 2007, the Bordines attracted some unwanted attention for their hobby. The couple was paddle boarding on West Bay, well away from where governors from all over the country were lining up at the bay. However, soon, police boats were motoring their way.

“The officer got to us, and the first thing he said was ‘What are those unique boards?’



Alex Thayer has been paddle boarding for a couple of years and now helps instruct the SUP classes. Photo by Jordan Bates.

Nancy remembers. The police were aware that the couple wasn’t a threat, but they were simply curious about the novelty of stand-up paddle boarding.

The sport initially became popular out of surfing. However, the Bordines attribute the new popularity of the sport to its versatility.

“Give someone five minutes to learn, then

the rest of their life to get better,” says Larry, who still crafts many of the boards that the couple sell in the shop.

Kate Easlick echoed this sentiment. “You can stand on it, you can sit on it, you can swim off it. I’ve taken it down rivers. You can take it surfing. You can fish off it.”

The Bordines have seen people of all ages take to the sport, which has helped it to branched out significantly.

“There are your standard, family-ready

boards. There is a board designed for doing yoga. There is also a board designed for going fast and long distances.”

It’s this last board that has attracted some of the most avid enthusiasts to the sport. Next week, many of these enthusiasts will gather in Traverse City for the TC Waterman Challenge and Expo. The race is the Midwest’s largest stand-up paddle board event, attracting participants to the Grand Traverse Bay area to race 11 miles through the water.

The race will be held on August 16. In addition to the 11-mile, 3.5-mile, and 100-meter-dash races, an expo event offers attendees the opportunity to meet 60 stand-up paddle board retailers from all over the Midwest.

So what’s the future of stand-up paddle boarding — should we expect to continue to see the beautiful silhouettes on our lakes or is it just a fad?

If Marcia Laisure, a Frankfort vacationer from downstate is any indication, the answer is that it’s here to stay. After trying the board once, she says “It’s more difficult than it looks, but I like it. I may even buy one!”

If you are interested in trying stand-up paddle boarding for yourself, the Beach Nut Surf Shop hosts free demos every Wednesday night at Frankfort beach around 7 p.m. through the end of August. You can also rent boards from the Beach Nut Surf Shop seven days a week, although big groups are encouraged to make advanced reservations.



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## Bay to Bay

### Park seeks your trail input

From Staff Reports

The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore proposes to develop a hiking and paddling trail that follows the Lake Michigan shoreline in the park from Platte Bay to Good Harbor Bay. To do so, the National Lakeshore will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), which will describe and analyze alternatives for this trail.

The 2009 Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Final General Management Plan / Wilderness Study / Environmental Impact Statement (GMP) proposed a trail for hikers and Lake Michigan paddlers that would parallel the Lake Michigan shoreline within the National Lakeshore and would make use of active beach areas or existing disturbed areas and corridors. The concept is to develop a trail system for hikers and Lake Michigan paddlers that includes a designated and signed route, lake access points, and backcountry campsites. The routes could be used by “through” hikers and paddlers (those wishing to travel the entire route), as well as day users.

The National Lakeshore is working with the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes to develop this trail plan. Some preliminary work and idea generation has been performed with coordination by the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, in addition to park staff and volunteers. A team of five graduate students from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment spent the summer of 2013 gathering data on possible backpack and kayak routes, lake access points, and backcountry campsites. While this student report is distinct from the NPS planning process, it provides a wealth of good information and ideas that the National Lakeshore may consider as it begins crafting its own plan.

You can help the National Lakeshore come up with other ideas and alternatives to consider as it moves forward. Your input regarding issues or concerns relevant to you is an important part of this planning and impact assessment process. You can find background information and provide your comments online at [ParkPlanning.nps.gov/BaytoBayTrail](http://ParkPlanning.nps.gov/BaytoBayTrail). Comments may also be mailed to the National Lakeshore (Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI, 49630).

The National Lakeshore requests that you provide your comments by September 15. The comments you submit during this “scoping” phase of planning will be evaluated and considered during the development of alternatives and analysis of impacts. The EA will then be made available for further public review and comment, which is scheduled for release next summer, when the park will again solicit your input.

A public scoping meeting on this project is scheduled for Thursday, August 14, from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center Auditorium in Empire. A presentation will be made at the beginning of the meeting and park staff will be available to answer questions about the project. Written comments will also be accepted at the meeting.

The National Lakeshore looks forward to receiving your thoughts and opinions concerning the Bay to Bay Trail Plan and Environmental Assessment. For more information, please contact Kevin Skerl, chief of Natural Resources, at 231-326-4750, or visit [Nps.gov/slbel/](http://Nps.gov/slbel/).

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Stones

Continued from page 1

a hub of industry, slag is a by-product of the smelting process. Iron ore must be heated to high temperatures to separate the iron from impurities such as silicon dioxide (found in nature as quartz) and other oxides. After cooling, slag — which has a glass-like consistency and sometimes bits of iron — will vary in color, based on the oxides that are present. During the 1800s, South Frankfort’s iron foundry produced slag in shades of green, purple, and gray. The iron was melted, cooled, and shipped to modernize the American Midwest with new buildings and railroads made of steel; the slag, meanwhile, was unceremoniously buried, dumped in Betsie Bay, or used alongside the railroad tracks as stabilizer.

Glacier-crushed fossilized coral and industrial waste from a bygone era do not sound like they belong together. Though seemingly dissimilar, both can be found by someone who puts in enough effort. Both can be polished up with the right equipment. Both can be cut by a talented hand. They even compliment one another when set in a ring or a necklace.

From the rubble, both have found new life and purpose; worth and value.

Andy Higgins, of the new rock shop Sunbeams of Promise in downtown Frankfort, understands this parable as more than one of extinction and industrial waste. In his own life, it is a story of addiction and loss that has brought him to this point.

“Things that you think you can’t live through? Turns out, you can get through them,” says Higgins, who now, with perspective, sees his hard times as gifts. “It took awhile. Even this slag. It might have taken 140 years. But in time, it turns into something beautiful. And that applies to everything in my life.”

A Tectonic Shift

Seven years ago, Higgins was drowning in the seas of success. Pushing hard against his own internal pressures, he reached for happiness but found addiction. His marriage failed. He lost his children. He tried to dry out but failed over and over again. Until he didn’t. He picked up the pieces of his life and manufactured a new one, free of the impurities that had plagued him.

In 2011, Higgins moved from Indiana to Benzie County, a place with childhood memories of crystal clear lakes, rock hunting, and peacefulness at his family’s cottage. He found a meaningful job at an adult foster care facility, humbling work after being quite successful in the real estate market. He was working long weekends and some weeknights. It was during the days off that he quieted his internal stirrings with the loud and abrasive hobby of cutting and polishing rocks.

Two years later, he found a partner in Paula Gala, a transplant from downstate who had escaped to the slower pace of Northern Michigan. Higgins cut a heart-shaped pendant out of a Petoskey. He polished it and gave it to her as a birthday gift.

It was clear to Gala that his talent was way beyond the hobby level. Discussions ensued about starting a shop where they would sell stones and jewelry. A decision had to be made between his steady employment or his entrepreneurial aspirations.

“I knew I had to choose one or the other, and it was choose the safety and security of my current job or choose doing what I love and trusting that it would be okay,” says Higgins, who admits to being worried about starting a new venture that was sure to be less stable

and more stressful. But with Gala’s support, he took the leap.

Two weeks later, in June of 2014, they opened a shop. Now two months into the summer season, Higgins —and Gala, too — are keeping quite busy.

As it turns out, Gala is an expert at cutting rocks, also, though the couple didn’t know it when she first started. Gala is reluctant to admit her own talent, and it also seems difficult for her to sit and chat with a reporter while there are stones to be cut and orders to be filled.



In this necklace, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula is made of Leland blue stone, Leland’s equivalent of slag. The Lower Peninsula is made of Petoskey stone. Photo by Jordan Bates.

“I started cutting and kind of took to it. It comes naturally to me for some reason. I don’t try to do it,” Gala says. “I could do it all day. It doesn’t even occur to me to get tired of it.”

“It is not about making money,” Higgins says. “It is about giving customers a memory of Benzie County that they can take back with them to their busy lives in the city.”

This line, and every other line from Higgins, could be straight out of a Public Relations handbook. Having worked in the real estate industry, Higgins knows a cheesy line when he hears one — even when he is the one saying it.

“I know that sounds like a whole bunch of bull,” he adds. “But that is what we do. It is the driving force behind what we do.”

These are not just lines from a manual. They are a philosophy polished by a difficult life.

“We want to share the warmth of this community with everyone that comes into the store,” Higgins says. “It’s a lot more about relationships than it is about Petoskey stone jewelry.”

A few days prior, a couple had come in with their young daughter. The girl was looking at a rock, and — as kids do — she accidentally dropped it on the floor. The rock broke. The parents were embarrassed. Higgins

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and Gala didn’t mind.

“We had a clumsy daughter, and they were very kind to her,” says Denise Short, of Whitehall, Michigan. She goes on to say that this kindness, understanding, and patience was a huge part of why the family returned a few days later, becoming repeat customers.

Higgins admits that the little girl’s broken rock can’t be put back together, but the pieces will be re-shaped, tumbled, polished, and made again into something new.

From the rubble, new life and purpose; worth and value.

The Sunbeams of Promise rock shop is located on Main Street in downtown Frankfort above the Frankfort Deli. It is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can see their creations online at sunbeamsopromise.etsy.com.

Your Story in Stone

Sunbeams of Promise can usually cut and polish stones in an hour, or at the most, in a single day.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## CONSTANTLY FLOWING

### Mondays

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. There will be 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. Every Monday in August from 10-11am.

Grow Benzie Farmers’ Market, 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115), Benzonia. 3-7pm.

Open sewing studio at Grow Benzie. 6-9pm.

### Tuesdays

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

Pick-up soccer for all skill levels at the fields behind Watson car dealership in Benzonia. 7pm.

Dance Benzie: Improvisational partner dancing at the Mills Community House in Benzonia. Free, donations welcome. 8-10pm.

### Thursdays

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

Story hour with Miss Julie at Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort. 10-11am.

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

Steve Fernand will be singing songs from the last century on Thursdays and Saturdays from 6-9pm throughout the summer at the Cold Creek Inn in Beulah.

### Saturdays

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

Join a Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore ranger for a different walk or talk or hike every Saturday — there’s always something happening at 1pm. To find out what’s happening, visit <http://goo.gl/aLUdAG> or call 231-326-5134 for details.

## ON THE DOCK

### Thursday, August 14

Great Lakes Discovery Sail with Inland Seas Education Association will be a unique, hands-on experience for the entire family that sets sail from Frankfort. Learn more about the Great Lakes ecosystem by trawling for fish, collecting plankton, sampling the lake bottom, and completing water-quality tests. Become part of the maritime sailing tradition by raising the anchor, hoisting the sails, and steering the schooner. Each sail is three hours in length (please arrive 30 minutes prior to sail). Ages 5 and up. \$35 per adult; \$25 for children under 18. Email [isea@schoolship.org](mailto:isea@schoolship.org) or call 231-271-3077 for more information. 9am-12pm.

### Thursday, August 14

Invasive species removal at Arcadia Dunes with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. Please dress for the weather, including a hat for the sun and comfortable shoes. Also bring water. All tools will be provided. Visit [www.gtrlc.org/events](http://www.gtrlc.org/events) or call 231-929-7911 to RSVP. Event is free. 10am-12pm

### Thursday, August 14

The Benzie Audubon Club’s beach potluck picnic and shorebirds. Bring your park pass, food to share, and your own beach chairs to Peterson Road beach, in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. All of Audubon’s field trips and programs are open to the public without charge, and everyone is welcome! Visit [benzieaudubon.org](http://benzieaudubon.org) or call 231-871-0503 for more information. Birding at 5:30pm. Picnic at 7pm.

### Thursday, August 14

Benzie Shores District Library presentation by Ann Bardens McClellan and Eileen Paul Millard based on their book “Journey to the Center” at 7pm.

### Thursday, August 14

“From Depression Poverty to Wartime Prosperity,” a series of photographs of Michigan from 1935-1943 will be the topic of the Benzonia Academy Lecture Series at the Mills Community House. 7pm.

### Thursday, August 14

Last ‘Beulah Music in the Park’ for the season. 7-8pm

### Thurs - Wed, August 14 - 20

Plein-air paintings by local artist Lisa Wilkins Schulte of Traverse City will be featured at Live For Art Gallery in Beulah. Schulte paints in pastel and acrylic. She feels that “art should be a fun, positive experience for both the artist and viewer.” Her use of vibrant color reflects her gregarious personality. 231-882-9370

### Friday, August 15

The Periwinkle Garden Club of Frankfort will have their monthly program “A Bounty of Flowers.” This month’s program is a road trip to Field of Flowers Farm in Leelanau County. Bring your lunch; beverage and dessert provided. Meet at Trinity Lutheran Church in Frankfort at 11am to carpool.

### Friday - Saturday, August 15 - 16

38th Annual Frankfort Art Fair is the city’s largest two-day art fair with more than 175 artists in Market Square Park. Call 231-352-7251 or visit [www/frankfort-elberta.com](http://www/frankfort-elberta.com) for more information. 4-8pm on Friday; 10am-5pm on Saturday.

### Friday, August 15

Frankfort United Methodist Church’s 8th Annual Pulled Pork Picnic. Menu includes a pulled pork sandwich, baked beans, coleslaw, potato chips, dessert, and choice of iced tea, lemonade, or water. Cost is \$8 for adults and \$5 for children under the age of 12. 537 Crystal Avenue (M-22) in Frankfort. 5-7pm.

### Friday, August 15

Artist talk with fiber artist Susan Moran. Moran studies world textile techniques and patterns, using them to create her own work that is inspired by the wild places near her Michigan home. This free artist talk is offered in partnership with the Jean Noble Parsons Center and Eastern Michigan University. Admission is free, but space is limited. Visit [OliverArtCenterFrankfort.org](http://OliverArtCenterFrankfort.org) or call 231-352-4151 for more information. 5:30pm.

### Friday, August 15

A&W Cruise-In in Frankfort from 5-9pm. Call 231-352-9021 for more information.

### Friday, August 15

Concert in Frankfort’s Mineral Springs Park with Saul Chandler. Free. 7-8pm.

### Saturday, August 16

St. Ann’s Men’s Club Pancake Breakfast in Frankfort.

### Saturday, August 16

Frankfort Collector Car Show & Antique & Classic Boat Show with more than 100 cars on display. You can register at <http://www/frankfort-elberta.com> for these shows or call 231-352-7251 for more information. 8am-5pm

### Saturday, August 16

Friends of the Benzie Shores District Library Annual Used Book Sale in Frankfort. 9am-4pm.

### Saturday, August 16

Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain in Thompsonville will present the 2014 Legacy Award to Travel Michigan’s vice president, George Zimmermann, for his leadership in spearheading the launch of the phenomenally successful Pure Michigan campaign. Tickets to the gala are \$75 per person and can be purchased online [www.michiganlegacyart-park.org/events](http://www.michiganlegacyart-park.org/events) or by calling 231-378-4963. Sponsor tickets start at \$250 and are partially tax-deductible.

### Saturday, August 16

“A Walk with Gwen” campaign will be held to honor the world-renowned artist Gwen Frostic and to raise funds for restoring her historic home and wildlife sanctuary. On the 50th anniversary of the studio’s opening, the event will be a celebration of Gwen’s life and work. Food, raffles, sales, auctions, and much more will be available for the sole purpose of restoring the building, which hasn’t been renovated since the beloved art studio was built in 1964. Gwen Frostic Prints at 5140 River Road, just outside Benzonia. <http://www.gwenfrostic.com>. 2-5pm.

### Saturday, August 16

Benzie Conservation District’s water tour on Upper Platte Lake. Join for the fourth and final water tour of the year at Veteran’s Campground access site. Call 231-882-4391 or visit [www.benziecd.org](http://www.benziecd.org) for more information. 9am-12pm.

### Sunday, August 17

The Frankfort Football Pigskin Dinner in Mineral Springs Park will feature BBQ pork or hotdogs, coleslaw, baked beans, potato salad, french fries, corn on the cob, dessert, and drinks. Come meet the JV and Varsity football teams and help them raise money for a successful season. Tickets are \$7 per person or \$25 per family. 4:30-7pm.

### Sunday, August 17

The Benzie Area Symphony Orchestra (BASO) will present a varied program of pieces depicting summer. The auditioning conductor will be Malcolm Brannen, who began studying the violin before age nine and who played in military ensembles and directed music programs in Grand Rapids. He has served as a performer, conductor, and teacher. The composers early in the program include Felix Mendelssohn, Edward Elgar, and Antonio Vivaldi, while those in the later part include Peter Illich Tchaikowsky,



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The Betsie Current is a free tabloid, published 12 times this year and distributed throughout Benzie County. Advertising inquiries, comments, suggestions, critiques, articles, photos, poems, and letters are welcome. © 2014, The Betsie Current, all rights reserved. [www.BetsieCurrent.com](http://www.BetsieCurrent.com)



Edward Elgar, Chuck Elledge, Brian Bal-mages, and Leroy Anderson. The concert will be held at the Benzie Central High School Au-ditorium, located two miles east of US31 on Homestead Road in Benzonia. Guest violinist Dr. Libor Ondras -- who studied in Moscow, Prague, and Houston and who has performed, conducted, and taught widely in Europe and the United States -- will participate in the Vivaldi selections. Dr. Ondras is the new music director for the Great Lakes Cham-ber Orchestra. Tickets may be purchased at the door: \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students 12 and older, and free for children under 12. Additional information may be found on Facebook or on the BASO website [www.benziesymphony.com](http://www.benziesymphony.com). Contact Nancy Williamson by email [Nwilliamson@msn.com](mailto:Nwilliamson@msn.com) or call 231-352-5367.

Wednesday, August 20

Wednesday Night Fishing League: Join us for a fun night of mildly competitive fishing fun! Extra points for youth anglers and fun for all ages. Check out [www.gtasfa.com](http://www.gtasfa.com) for more information or stop into Big Bob's Up North Outfitters in Frankfort. 6-9:30pm

Thurs - Mon, August 21 - 25

The Pinta and the Nina replicas of Christo-pher Columbus's ships will be docked at the Frankfort Municipal Marina until their de-parture early Tuesday morning. The Nina was built completely by hand and without the use of power tools. The Pinta was recently built in Brazil to accompany the Nina on all of her travels. Both ships tour together as a new and enhanced 'sailing museum' for the purpose of educating the public and school children. No reservations necessary, however, teachers or organizations wishing to schedule a 30-min-ute guided tour (for a minimum of 15 persons; no maximum) with a crew member should email [columfnd1492@gmail.com](mailto:columfnd1492@gmail.com) or call 787-672-2152. \$5 per person. [www.thenina.com](http://www.thenina.com) Frankfort Municipal Marina at 606 Main Street. Open every day from 9am-6pm

Friday, August 22

Benzie Fishing Frenzy Tournament: Ladies classic is on Friday with a \$100 entry fee (includes Big Fish) and is weigh your best five. The Pro Division is Saturday and Sunday with a \$500 entry (includes Big Fish) and is weight your best 10. The Amateur Division is also Saturday and Sunday with a \$300 entry fee (includes Big Fish) and weigh your best 10. Big Fish Division alone is Saturday and Sunday with a \$100 fee and weigh your biggest single fish each day. The 333 Championship Series is Saturday and Sunday with \$150 entree fee and weigh your best three fish in two days. Captain's meetings will be at Mineral Springs Park Pavillion at 7:30pm on Thursday and Friday. On-site registration begins at 5pm both days. The weigh-ins will occur



at 1pm daily at Mineral Springs Park Pavillion.

Friday - Sunday, August 22 - 24

National Coho Salmon Festival in Honor. Be-ginning in 1967, this annual festival celebrates the salmon run up the Benzie County rivers. Honor is considered the 'birthplace' of salmon in the state of Michigan, as the first salmon were planted in the Platte River. Will include a parade, carnival, beer tent, horseshoe tourna-ment, smoked fish contest, and car show, as well as arts & crafts and a flea market. <http://bit.ly/1rM3m9s>

Saturday, August 23

Veteran-themed model air show for to raise money for the Wounded Warrior Project at the Thompsonville Airport. Show is free. 231-882-4990. 10am-3pm.

Saturday, August 23, 1873

This day in history: The "Tragedy" of Crystal Lake.

Tuesday, August 26

Join the Spanish Conversation Group at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort for an evening of fun. Come practice your lan-guage skills and meet other Spanish speakers. [www.benzieshoreslibrary.org](http://www.benzieshoreslibrary.org) 7-8pm.

Wednesday, August 27

Plant It Wild presents "Master the Art and Science of Composting" with Gary Michalek, a master gardener and master composter. Michalek will divulge the best methods to re-use nature's bounty through composting by explaining different methods, set-up, and troubleshooting, as well as how to use com-post in gardens. All PIW programs are free and open to the public. Frankfort's Trinity Lutheran Church at 955 James Street between 9th and 10th streets. 231-889-7020. 7pm.

Wednesday, August 27

Concert in the Elberta Waterfront Park, fea-turing The Betsie Bay Minstrels. "Music that never grows old!" 7-9pm.

Thursday, August 28

Jonathan P. Hawley presents his new book "From Artisans to Artists: Betsie Bay's His-toric 'Island' Story" at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort. 7pm.

Thursday, August 28

Chamber Music North Concert at the Oliver Art Center. Written in his unmistakable voice, Brahms' String Sextets No.1 in B Flat Major, Op. 18 & No. 2 in G Major, Op. 36 are rich in sonority and wealth of musical ideas. These masterpieces are full of radiance, emotional turmoil & musical intricacy. Sextet: A string quartet plus an additional viola and cello. 7:30pm

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# Jones

Continued from page 1

depths to connect nearby inland lakes by so-called “slack-water” canals to Lake Michigan. Prior to 1873, Crystal Lake, a former embayment of glacial Lake Algonquin, was 38 feet above Lake Michigan. There was virtually no beach, and white-capped waves lapped to the base of the surrounding high ridges. This just wouldn’t do, so a very detailed map was drawn, routes were surveyed, and stock was sold. “Proposed Improvements” included:

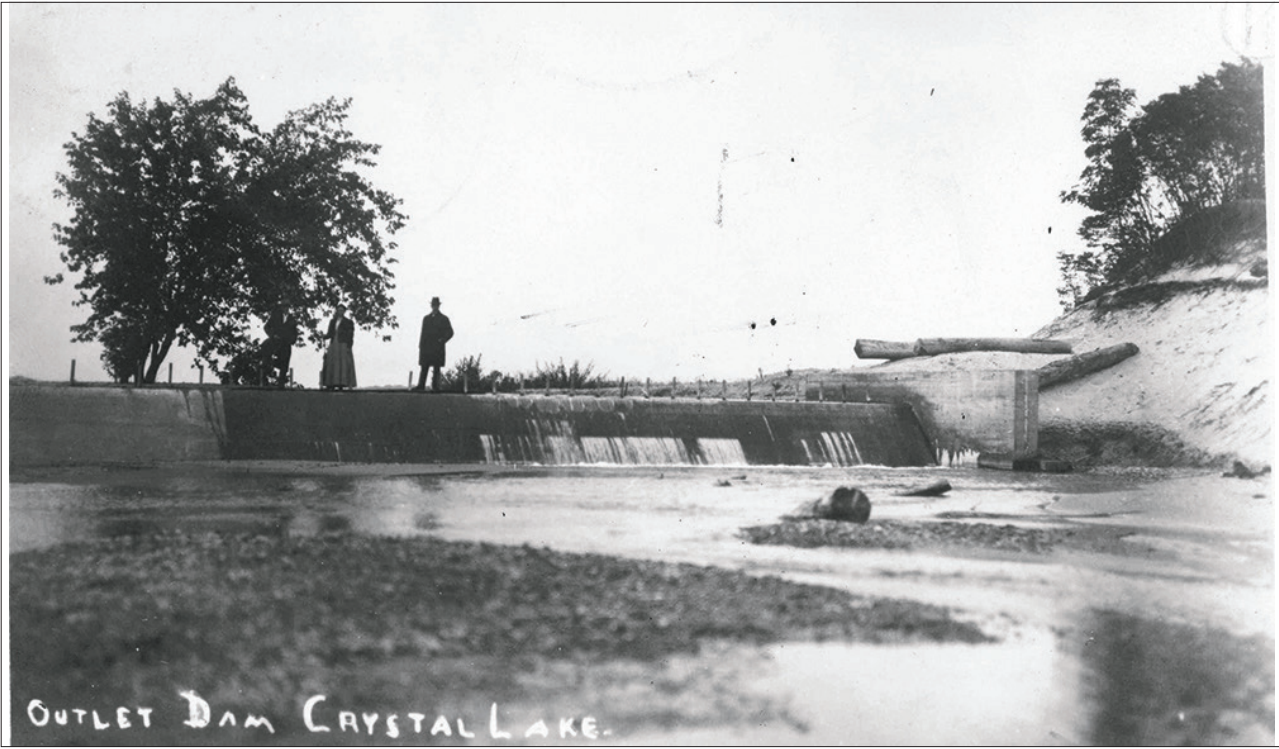
- South Canal: from the outlet of Crystal Lake into the Betsie River and on to Betsie Lake/Bay at Frankfort
- North Canal: from Platte Lake through Rush Lake, Long Lake, and Round Lake into Crystal Lake.

“Obstructions” consisted of logs, rocks, snags, etc. (A “West Canal” was independently considered prior to 1873 but never realized.) The South Canal began with the clearing of obstructions from the Betsie River, removing vegetation and dredging the outlet, as well as building a small dam to serve as a temporary “plug” to hold back the waters of Crystal Lake. Unfortunately, the whitecap waves of Crystal Lake washed out the plug before a permanent dam and canal could be completed. The level of Crystal Lake dropped precipitously by 20 feet, and a torrent of 68 billion gallons of water poured down the outlet. While a canal system was never realized, the lowering of the lake created a 21-mile perimeter of newly exposed sandy beach

where none had previously existed. This made possible the founding of the Village of Beulah, the coming of the railroad, the installation of telegraph and telephone lines, the building of perimeter roads, the development of lakeside resorts, and the construction of 1,100 cottages. This epochal event is unsurpassed in its magnitude when compared to all other large inland lakes in Michigan. The event was so epochal in its nature as to have had a permanent bearing upon the development and future of Benzie County. Throughout its early history, Crystal Lake experienced extreme fluctuations of several feet in level. This continued for another 40 years after the drawdown resulting from the ill-fated attempt at building a canal. A

with contemporary philosophy on the sense of place and environmental consequence of being at Crystal Lake. *The Comedy* concludes that the project was neither ill-advised nor a complete failure, since the “plug” was accidentally pulled by the waves of Crystal Lake, thereby exonerating Archibald Jones, the man who (allegedly) pulled the plug at Crystal Lake.

*Celebrate Archibald Jones Day on Saturday, August 23, from 12:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. in downtown Beulah. The day's festivities will commemorate the event and the man who "built better than he knew." The program will include the dedication of a Michigan Historical Marker, a re-enactment of "The*



**Crystal Lake Outlet Dam (ca. 1912-1913). Archives of the Traverse City History Center, Image 52, entitled, “Crystal Lake outlet dam with three people standing in (sic) the lake”. Photo courtesy of the History Center of Traverse City.**

series of makeshift temporary dams were repeatedly built and removed by logging operations, and they occasionally collapsed of their own accord. Finally in 1911, a permanent concrete dam was built to contain the lake at its “normal” level. Over the ensuing century, however, there has been continued controversy as various groups continue to debate whether the lake is “too high” or “too low.” The present two-level system (600 feet +/- 0.25 feet) is a compromise, setting a high summer level to allow for boating and water recreation and a low winter level to minimize shoreline erosion. (In 2014, the Crystal Lake & Watershed Association installed a system to automatically monitor the lake level every 15 minutes throughout the year.) *The Tragedy of Crystal Lake* was described in a small pamphlet, written in 1922 by William L. Case, who witnessed the event as a young boy. It raised a number of questions: What caused the lowering of the Lake? Who was Archibald Jones — a scapegoat blamed for an ill-conceived project or a bootstrap engineer, to be celebrated as a hero? *The Comedy of Crystal Lake* is a sequel, which contains many rediscoveries: how Archibald Jones came to Crystal Lake; his plans for three canals; a timeline of events; who named Crystal Lake; the century of debate over control of the level of Crystal Lake; and “Sidelights” of myriad individuals, events, and subjects,

*Tragedy of Crystal Lake,” the presentation of stock certificates, fun, and games from the 1870s, entertainment, music, food, and a reading by Stacy Daniels from his forthcoming book about Archibald Jones and the lowering of Crystal Lake. The event is sponsored by the Crystal Lake & Watershed Association, the Benzie Area Historical Society, the Darcy Library, and the Beulah Boosters.*

Stacy L. Daniels, a Frankfort native and long-time littorian on Crystal Lake, read “The Tragedy” as a young boy. After becoming a professional environmental engineer, his interest in local history motivated him to research the story of Archibald Jones and to write “The Comedy of Crystal Lake.” He has been involved with environmental studies of Crystal Lake since the 1960s. As a member of the Crystal Lake & Watershed Association, he has chaired committees on education & communications and water quality; edited the newsletter, “Crystal Whitecaps” and the webpage [www.CLWA.us](http://www.CLWA.us); and established the Crystal Lake Walkabout, a hands-on educational program for young adults, in 1993. Daniels, his wife Carol, and their daughter’s family, share cottages on the northwest shore of Crystal Lake. Look for Daniels dressed up as Archibald Jones at local 4th of July parades and running the Crystal Lake Team Marathon in August.

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# Wild Things

Continued from page 1

and corncob skewers for spiky hair. He's even sticking his tongue out at you; a tongue that's made from a toy dinosaur's tail. Across the room, there is a pristine old dollhouse. Hanging above it is a fish sculpture, painted lime green with deer antlers for fins and barbed wire for teeth. Clinging to a framed picture on the wall as if she were rock-climbing in a gym is a Barbie whose skin has been painted all over with black and white cow spots. In contrast, a pair of life-size mannequin legs and attached swimming fins have been painted and appear to be diving into a bucket like Amazon frog legs into a pool of water. The beams in the ceiling are exposed, and plenty of light pours into the shop. Outside in the side yard, there are outbuildings made from old windows and adorned with rusty license plates and the grill of a yellow Jeep.

To have such an inventive imagination is a rarity. The creator of the madness is Bob Thomas, known simply to friends as "BT."

In 2004, 21 years after his first visit to Benzie County, BT threw out his computer, packed up his life in Virginia, and moved a barn full of antiques via four truckloads all the way to Northern Michigan. He had been making annual summer pilgrimages Up North, but he was finally ready to trade in big city life for a lake house and swap out a business of carving headstones for one of sculpting from scraps.

BT grew up in the Washington, D.C., area. After graduating from Washington and Lee University with a degree in journalism — which he unabashedly told this reporter there is no money in — he tried his hand at various enterprises, notably carving monuments (gravestones) for his family's business and later raising pigs on his farm. Of the latter, he quips, "I ate well but made no money."

The Thomas family business is a cemetery down the street from Arlington National Cemetery, certainly an eminent location. Bob still maintains three other monument shops in the D.C. area but leaves them in the hands of his partners, who, he says smiling, pay him "to stay away."

And for the most part, he seems happy to. A warm, gregarious, and witty man, BT made friends here quickly. Moreover, he has attained notoriety not only for his Frankfort business but also for his own prowess as a sculptor.

From way-out fish to Barbies gone wild,

BT's sculptures are continually evolving. He created his "first fish" in 2005, inspired by his acquisition of folk art from The Ben Sherman (Manistee) estate at an auction in Benzonia. He had been so inspired by Sherman's artwork that he thought, "Hey, I can do that." BT entered the fish sculpture in a show at Point Betsie Lighthouse, where it was purchased by Wes Blizzard. BT credits the purchase to affirming that yes, indeed, he could do this art thing.

He had already begun collecting supplies and accessories (now stored in boxes in the backroom of his shop) such as: deer antlers (good as shark fins), shoehorns (useful for fish scales), table legs, Sculpey Baked Clay, a bag of turkey feet, barbed wire, Venetian



Of all the wild things in his shop, BT may be the wildest of them all. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

blinds, croquet mallets, driftwood, stumps, and other very unusual accouterments. His brother, an avid hunter, gave him a deer hide that he painted and used for fish scales. A south Florida fisherman sent a dozen swordfish bills as payment (trade) for a sculpture commission. A local picker recently sold him a pair of cow skulls.

"Half the fun is chasing down the parts and pieces for my sculptures," he remarks.

In 2008, one of BT's friends surreptitiously entered a fish sculpture called "Mick Jagged," into a show on Solomon's Island, Maryland. The show, called "Wild Things," was held in Anne Marie Gardens and owned by the Smithsonian Institute. BT's entry won first prize and was named "The Wildest of the Wild Things." The fish, made from a birch bark log and, of course, various other add-ons, is now on display at his home on the south shore of Crystal Lake. (Though you may have seen it, along with five log "heads," at the Oliver Art Center's "Furniture, Fiber, and Sculpture" gallery last spring.)

Though there are still many antiques at his shop, BT admits that the art is taking over.

But no matter — for isn't that what wild things do?

Most days you can find BT at 1311 Forest Avenue in Frankfort, but you might call first to see if he is in: 703-675-7835. You will enjoy browsing his monumental finds, antiques, and embellishments, with no pressure to buy — just have fun! There is a blog, if you are interested, but don't count on Bob Thomas to know what's being written — no computer, remember? Visit OutsiderArtOriginalSculptures.blogspot.com.



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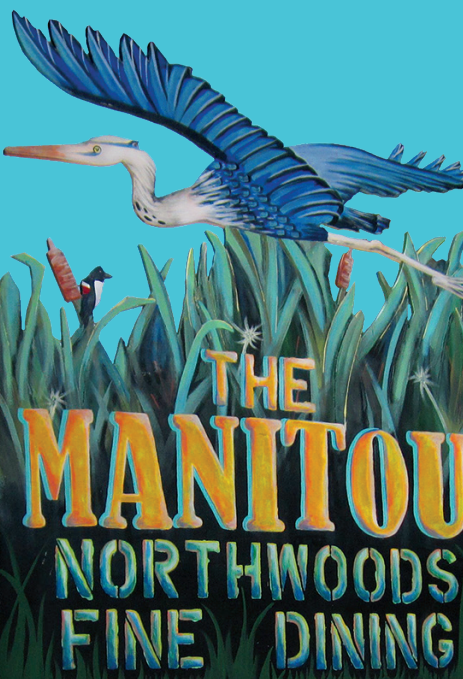
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