

The Well-Traveled Painted Lady

Copemish Depot finds new home near Glen Arbor

By F. Josephine Arrowood
Current Contributor

There is a painted lady in Glen Arbor, setting heads a-swivel as they walk, bike, or drive past Bay Lane at M-22. Although diminutive at under 700 square feet, she has an outsized personality. She is well-traveled for her age—at least 125 years—and her pedigree is just as colorful as her painted trim, ornate corbels, and drop finials.

For more than five decades, she has been hiding in plain sight in the former Wildflowers retail compound on South Glen Lake Road. In the spring of 2021, she began a new chapter as the private residence of a family with an abiding affection for the Glen Arbor area.

“She” wears a sign proclaiming herself the Copemish Depot. But Copemish, a sleepy village in northeastern Manistee County, is a solid 50 miles away, and no rail service requiring a passenger station was ever erected in Glen Arbor—a line was planned from Cedar City in the 1920s, but was instead diverted to Provemont, now known as the village of Lake Leelanau.

So, what is the connection between Glen Arbor and the charming little depot from



The Copemish Depot has been moved several times over its 125-year history. The most recent move is to a half-acre of land on the Crystal River in Glen Arbor, where Cynthia Badan, a longtime season resident, and her adult children intend to use it as dwelling. Photo courtesy of the Glen Arbor Sun.

Copemish?

Her story began when railroads were king and the lumber boom made fortunes in much of Northern Michigan. In 1889,

two rail companies—the Frankfort & Southeastern (which would later become part of the Ann Arbor Railroad) and the Chicago & Western Michigan (later the Pere

Marquette)—created a railroad intersection called a “diamond crossing”* in southern Benzie County. This mechanical innovation would efficiently connect people and goods from Northern Michigan, the Upper Peninsula, and Wisconsin with Grand Rapids, Chicago, Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Ohio.

The hub quickly became a settlement known as Thompsonville; by 1900, it was known as the “biggest little town in Michigan.” Its two depots, situated across from each other on the diamond, oversaw not only materials and products, but also tourists who flocked to resorts at Frankfort, Crystal Lake, Traverse City, Solon, Provemont, and beyond. The pretty painted lady, owned by the Ann Arbor Railroad, sat east of the tracks, adjacent to the so-called “switch tower,” a ground-interlocking machine in a shed that facilitated the movement of trains from one rail line to another.

Other towns along these rail routes thrived during the lumber era, too, including Copemish, situated about four miles southeast of Thompsonville, just over the Benzie-Manistee county line. But in 1917, Copemish’s original depot, also built

Please see Painted Lady on page 6

Know Your Neighbor

How the Grand Traverse Band makes a difference Up North

By Greta Bolger
Current Contributor

With the nation about to celebrate Independence Day—a federal holiday commemorating the Declaration of Independence of the United States on July 4, 1776, from British rule—it is important to also recognize that there were people here before the colonization of the Americas. Moreover, it is just as important to recognize that, despite a harrowing history, these First People are still here today, as vital members of our businesses, communities, and schools.

There are 6.79 million Native American people in this country, and Michigan—which has the largest population of Native Americans east of the Mississippi—is among the 10 states with the largest indigenous population: there are more than 80,000 Native Americans in Michigan, and our state is home to 12 federally recognized tribes.

Though they are a sovereign nation, and one of 574 tribes to be granted such status by the U.S. federal government, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB) are an integral part of “Up North” life. The GTB’s many investments and other involvements provide economic benefits and growth opportunities within their six-county service area of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Manistee counties, and beyond.

The Grand Traverse Band refer to themselves as Anishinaabek or People from the

Three Fires; they primarily speak the eastern dialect of Anishinaabemowin.

Sovereignty

Federally recognized tribes are nations, meaning that they have sovereignty; in other words, like foreign nations, they have a nation-to-nation relationship with the

Rather, tribes have their own governments that manage their land and resources, provide education and other services for their citizens, and have control over legal matters within their territory.

Within the Grand Traverse Band, all tribal operations are overseen by a seven-member Tribal Council, which has broad



Within the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, all tribal operations are overseen by a seven-member Tribal Council, which has broad executive and legislative responsibilities for managing the tribe’s businesses and serving and governing its 4,200 members. From left to right: Associate Judge Michael Cory, Teresa Marshall, Mark Wilson, Robert Kewaygoshkum, Donna Swallows, Chair David Arroyo, Chief Judge Ken Acini. Photo courtesy of the Grand Traverse Band.

U.S. federal government. Additionally, the State of Michigan website says that it interacts with the 12 tribes on a “government-to-government basis” and that “the state generally does not have legal authority over tribal governments and tribal members when they are inside the tribe’s territory.”

executive and legislative responsibilities for managing the tribe’s businesses and serving and governing its 4,200 members. David Arroyo became chair of the Grand Traverse Band in August 2020, after having served as a member of the Tribal Council for the previous 16 years. He and his fellow council

members work full time in roles that require a broad base of skills and experience.

“You have to hit the ground running when you’re elected to the Council,” Arroyo says. “And especially when you are elected during a pandemic.” (See sidebar.)

Considering the wide-ranging responsibilities of the Tribal Council, Arroyo’s remark seems a major understatement.

Economic and Quality of Life Impact

The business operations of the GTB include gaming and hospitality operations at Leelanau Sands Casino and Lodge in Peshawbestown (Leelanau County) and at Turtle Creek Casino and Hotel and the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City, as well as Bay Shore Steel Works (Charlevoix County), Grand Traverse Engineering and Construction, and Grand Traverse Economic Development, the commercial investment entity of the GTB.

Another project, now under develop-

Please see GTB on page 8

Crystal Lake
Community Business Association
presents

4th of July Celebration
Firecracker 5k Run
1 Mile Family Run/Walk
Kids Games 10:30-noon
Coin Hunt on Beulah Beach 12:30
Parade at 1:30
(free shuttle parking Case Rd)
Music in the Park 7-9 PM
Fireworks over Crystal Lake 10:30 PM
(Alternate Rain Date July 5th)
Music in the Park 7PM
July 1 - Jazz North
July 8 - Jake Allen
July 15 - The Standing Hamptons
Beulah Art Fair
July 10 - 10AM to 5PM
Beulah Village Park

See more Events at CLCBA.org

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Stacey & Corey Bechler: Whimsical World of Art

Questions & Answers with community faces

Stacey Szerlong-Bechler (45) was born and raised in Frankfort; she grew up in a home on Crystal Lake with her parents and siblings. She took every art class that was available at Frankfort High School, then she attended the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District's Career Tech Center in Traverse City for commercial art and graphics during her junior and senior years. After graduating from Frankfort in 1994, Stacey continued taking art classes, though she had traveled out of Michigan to live in many states while working in the banking field. Eventually, however, Northern Michigan called her back home; she worked at a local bank while continuing to paint and draw in her free time, in hopes of one day making art her career.

Meanwhile, Corey Bechler (44) grew up downstate in Moscow and graduated from Jonesville High School in 1995. He then attended Hillsdale College, where he graduated in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science degree with a triple major in science, history, and art. At this point, he taught part time for a year downstate, before landing his dream job of teaching art at Benzie County Central Schools in 2000; Corey had vacationed up here for much of his youth, and he was excited to begin creating a year-round life in Northern Michigan.

Shortly after that big move, Corey and Stacey met in 2001; they married in 2003. Stacey had a son, Devin (21), when the couple met and after marrying, they had two more children, daughters Versailles (16) and Ava (14).

Since 2007, the couple has been making art together.

In 2003, Corey had started doing art fairs, where he would sell little wooden cars and trucks. It made sense as an extra income stream during the summers, when he was not teaching, and it was fun, but at the end of the day, it was also a lot of work for not a lot of return. After a couple of years, he transitioned to doing high-end pointillism paintings of beach scenes; but again, at the end of the day, it was a lot of work for not a lot of return. In 2007, the couple stumbled onto clay—Corey instantly fell in love with the clay part of the operations, and Stacey fell in love with the painting part.

As the years have gone by, the couple's clay work has transitioned from a part-time hobby for each of them to a full-time job for each of them. Stacey left her banking career in 2014 to work full time at glazing their clay creations, drawing and painting their tiles, running their online website and Etsy store, taking care of gallery and wholesale orders, boxing, shipping, and bookkeeping. Meanwhile, Corey does what he can when he gets home from teaching during the school year, but come summertime, he works full time at making pottery.

Notably, Corey's grandparents used to own one of the three canoe liveries on the Platte River; when his grandparents sold the business to the National Park Service in the early 1980s, they moved the log cabin to its current location, where Corey and Stacey live now, on the Platte River.

Continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with Bechlers between special orders and getting ready for one of the many upcoming art fairs that they have scheduled for this summer.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: When did you first get interested in art? What mediums have you worked with in the past, and how did you end up focusing on ceramics and doing what you do now?

STACEY SZERLONG-BECHLER: Creating art has always come naturally for me. I love to paint and draw. My first memory of an art piece that I was proud of was a self portrait crayon drawing that I made in Mrs. Kittleson's kindergarten class at Frankfort Elementary. From there, I developed a passion for drawing people, animals, and nature scenes. In school, I looked forward to art class at Frankfort, but most of all, I enjoyed

the commercial art and graphics program at the Career Tech Center in Traverse City. I continued with painting and drawing classes taught by various college professors and professional artists. I also continued with classes at Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) in Traverse City. It took Corey and I a few years to figure out a medium to make together that we both loved and could make a business out of. Corey is very talented with creating from clay, I naturally love to paint, so it was a great collaboration. I love to draw and paint our one-of-a-kind tiles and bring life to Corey's clay creations with color.

COREY BECHLER: I never took an art class in

own. It's fantastic.

CURRENT: What does a typical summer day of work look like for you?

STACEY: The summer months for our business are the busiest months for us. We are making product, managing our website, traveling to shows to sell our creations, fulfilling our online, wholesale, and gallery orders. My main job is the painter of our pottery—my number one daily focus is painting our inventory. I draw and paint our tiles and all of our clay creations. I manage our website and Etsy shop and package and ship our orders out. I also do all of our business book-



Stacey and Corey Bechler have been married since 2001, and they have been making art together since 2007. Photo courtesy of BechlerPottery.com.

high school. It wasn't actually until my "first" senior year of college that I was drawn to an art class. I took a black-and-white photography class and was hooked. I took more classes the following semester; I took more classes during the summer. I passed the subject exam for the State of Michigan and became certified to teach art. Then I got the call from a neighboring downstate school: "Can you come and teach art at our school?" I jumped at the chance to be a long-term sub for a lady on maternity leave. It was a fantastic opportunity. She came back at the end of the school year, but I was hooked. I love teaching art. I love molding and helping the next generation to admire and love the arts as much as I do. I applied at Benzie that following summer, got hired, and the rest is history! At Benzie, our students have won awards, our students have gone on to become professional artists, our students have developed a deeper understanding and love for the arts. As for Stacey and I, neither of us have ever taken a clay class—we are both self-taught. Thank goodness for the Darcy Library and YouTube!

CURRENT: Corey, what first interested you about teaching? What do you enjoy about this line of work?

COREY: I've always loved working with my hands and building stuff. Thanks to an amazing professor that I had in college, he pushed me into this art thing, and—coming from a long line of educators in my family—teaching has always been a passion. To show someone how to make something out of nothing, how to work with new tools, how to work with new materials, and then ultimately they have that "aha" moment and can create pieces on their

keeping, spreadsheets, bill-paying, taxes: you name it, I do it. Our studio is at our home, so we tend to work very late hours on a daily basis. Oh yes, and also fit in family time in between.

COREY: We have been blessed with a lot of loyal customers. Many of the pieces that we make will find their new "forever home" almost as soon as we unload it out of the kiln. Because of this, my summers are very crazy: I'm usually up by 6 a.m. to check on the pieces that I made the night before, to make sure they are drying OK in the studio without any cracks forming, then maybe I'll take the dog for a quick walk or go watch the sunrise on the beach, then come back and work in the clay studio—making, forming, glazing, throwing on the wheel, assembling, answering emails—until the late hours of the evening. Repeat each weekday. The weekends are a little different. I will get up early on a Saturday morning, drive to our show, trying to arrive there by 5 a.m. Set up our tent, then start putting our artwork on display. Talk to customers all day, pack up for the evening, then repeat the next morning, if it's a multi-day show. Then pack up and drive home, unload anything that is leftover; start the week again.

CURRENT: How has that changed since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Northern Michigan last March?

STACEY: We transitioned a lot last year with the cancellation of many of our art shows due to COVID. We went from making larger pieces to making smaller pieces for different shops and galleries. We still seem to work just as hard each day, but it seems like we are producing a larger quantity of smaller pieces than larger/more

time-consuming pieces. I will say it was nice to have a lot more family time with our kids this past year, as time can get away from us when we are busy working.

COREY: We live in a beautiful place that I often joke is a tourism Mecca. So our transition over the past year has included transforming our studio into more of a retail space and putting out signage on the weekends when we would be home, and we had people stop over to check out our gallery. It was fun to meet new people, see all of the different license plates that would pull into the driveway, and hear all of the wonderful stories that people had.

CURRENT: How have you seen your work grow and change? How do you hope that it will continue to grow? What is next? Have you had any collaborations?

STACEY: When we first started off with our clay creations, we were basically teaching ourselves what works and what doesn't. We had a lot of practice pieces and kiln mishaps along the way. With neither of us ever having taken a clay class, having a lot of practice and patience with clay—and with each other—we have both gotten better. We have been working on collaboration ideas since day one; each one seems to be more exciting than the last. We have a long-standing list of collaborative ideas that we will continue to work on.

COREY: Like most clay people, we started off making bowls and plates but have transitioned over the years to making more art pieces—clay robots, whimsical happy birds, ceramic canvases with Up North landscapes painted or glazed on them. It has been an amazing roller coaster ride so far. Last summer, with COVID hitting, we tried to transition into other markets; for instance, we partnered with Emily Pangborn of 5:14 Candles. [Editor's Note: This collaboration was previously profiled in a Q&A with Pangborn during 2020; find it in *The Betsie Current* archives online] We would make the clay vessels, and she would fill them with her amazing candles. We've also partnered with a handful of shops and galleries to do special pieces, just for their market. But all the while, we've been trying to create our own pieces to bring a little smile to each person's home.

CURRENT: What are some of your favorite projects that you have worked on? What are your top three best sellers? Any special awards or accolades that you have received?

STACEY: I absolutely love hand drawing and hand painting our large rectangle and square tiles. A few of my favorites are our large whimsical bird tiles, our large fish tiles, and our portrait tiles. Our customer favorite has to be our whimsical birds.

COREY: We've dabbled in a great many different forms over the years, but people have especially loved our clay robots, our Up North landscapes, our whimsical happy birds, and even our little screwy dogs, where we use pieces of screws and nails to make a little five-inch-tall dog sculpture. Traveling the Midwest over the summers, we have gotten numerous awards and accolades from various shows, but one of the most rewarding parts of this job is seeing the smiles that we bring to so many people's faces at each and every show!

CURRENT: What kinds of things do you do for fun, when you are not working? What other things are you involved with? How did you get involved with them, and why are you passionate about these causes?

STACEY: I love my family! Our three children mean the world to us. When I'm not working on our business, we love spending time with our kids and being a part of their lives. We are also very fortunate to live close to my parents, mother-in-law, sister and her family, and our extended family. Our family members that live

out of town frequently make the time to travel Up North to visit us, as well. We try to spend as much time with our family as possible. We enjoy escaping to the lakes and beaches around us in Benzie County. We love beach walks, hunting for Petoskey stones, watching the sunset, taking our small boat out on Crystal Lake for some tubing fun. And, of course, our Labrador retriever, Ellie, is always with us.

COREY: Besides teaching and playing with clay, I also coach basketball and volleyball. I don't have a tremendous amount of free time beyond those activities, but when I do, I try to go on nice, long walks on the beach, finding Petoskey stones and cool pieces of driftwood. We live in God's country, and every day that I get to walk on the beach is a great day .



Corey Bechler creates a clay tile of a fish, and Stacey Bechler brings it to life with color. Image courtesy of BechlerPottery.com.

CURRENT: How have you seen Benzie County/ Northern Michigan change since you first moved here, Corey? Or since you grew up here, Stacey? What are your hopes for the area in the future?

STACEY: I had a fantastic childhood growing up on Crystal Lake in Frankfort. I am so happy my kids get to experience this area as they grow up. Benzie County has definitely expanded in businesses and people over the past couple of decades. It is amazing to see the amount of people that vacation here in the summer or have second homes/cabins up here. It truly is a beautiful area.

COREY: Benzie County has always been home for me during the summers. However, I have noticed that this place has gotten crazier and crazier, year after year. As a kid, I remember seeing hundreds of people at the Fourth of July fireworks on Frankfort beach; now, as an adult, I see thousands of people on the beach, and it's almost impossible to find a parking spot in town that night. The secret is out—Benzie County is a fantastic place to be, and I am glad to be a part of it.

CURRENT: What are the biggest challenges and rewards of living/working in Benzie County and in Northern Michigan, in general? What is the best or most rewarding part of your job?

STACEY: Biggest reward for having a business in Benzie County would be our customers coming back to see us year after year. It's a great feeling to get to know the people we are creating our art for. It's humbling to witness someone look at your art and fall in love with a piece. It's also a very cool feeling when we get to see our art in someone's space, whether in person or a photo they have shared with us.

COREY: We have developed a very good following in downstate towns like Ann Arbor, Lansing, and Royal Oak, but working and living here in Benzie County, we are truly blessed. We're able to drive to whatever we need to, but we like to start our mornings off with beach walks and sunrises. Evenings are spent getting ice cream at our favorite spots, watching the sunsets, and finishing up in the studio.

CURRENT: What could Northern Michigan do to attract more talented young people to this area?

STACEY: Keeping our young adults in this area after school and attracting young adults from other areas is a challenge for our area. We

need more housing for all incomes and more businesses to employ all ages. We could always use more fun events like music festivals, art shows, concerts, food market pop-ups, creative art classes such as painting, pottery, beach yoga, more organized sports for all age groups, outdoor exercise classes, guided trail hiking, overnight camping experiences.

COREY: Whether it is attracting more young people or keeping the young people around that are local high school graduates, having more affordable housing and good-paying year-round jobs would certainly attract young people to this area.

CURRENT: What else does Northern Michigan/Benzie County need?

STACEY: A youth recreation center would be fantastic for our youth and all age groups; combining it with sports and the arts would be very cool for all ages. More parks for our kids and families to enjoy.

COREY: As a school teacher and a coach in the community, I see the need for some sort of a rec center for our area youth—a place for our kids to play and hang out in a safe atmosphere.

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

STACEY: We love The Roadhouse, Cherry Hut pies, lemon custard at The Dairy Maid in Frankfort. We enjoy the 4th of July parade and fireworks in Frankfort and Beulah. When we aren't traveling for our own art shows, we enjoy looking at other artists' artwork at local art shows. Canoeing the Platte River, swimming in Lake Michigan, boating on Crystal Lake, Point Betsie, Esch Beach, mouth of the Platte River, pontooning on Herring Lake.

COREY: I love hanging out at St. Ambrose. It is fun for the whole family. Great food, great spirits, great people, and great times to relax, play some games, and enjoy the day.

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

STACEY: A perfect summer day for us in Benzie County would be spent with our children and our families—sun up to sun down—doing any of the following: BBQ-ing, swimming, beach walking, skipping stones, boating/tubing, campfiring, s'mores, game playing, fireworks, good conversation, sunset watching, star gazing.

COREY: We got married on Peterson Beach along Platte Bay in the Sleeping Bear Dunes park. My perfect day is walking hand in hand with my wife along the beach, catching up with each other on our day, skipping stones, and taking in the view from one of the most beautiful places on this Earth.

Visit BechlerPottery.com or Etsy.com/shop/BechlerPottery online to learn more. Follow the couple via the "Bechler Pottery" group on Facebook. The studio gallery is open throughout the summer by appointment. Email bechlerpottery@gmail.com or call/text 231-944-5925 for more information. The Bechlers will also have their artwork on display and for sale at the following upcoming art shows: Saugatuck (July 3), Charlevoix (July 10-11), Ann Arbor (July 15-17), Glen Arbor (July 21), Traverse City (July 31), Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven (August 6-7), Charlevoix Waterfront Fine Art Festival (August 14), Art on the Riverfront in Grand Haven (August 21), Arts, Beats, and Eats in Royal Oak (September 3-6), Art and Apples in Rochester (September 10-12).

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Mondays

The Honey Bee Market. You have been to the flea market; now it is time to try The Honey Bee Market! Featuring local vendors with their wares, The Honey Bee Market is your chance to shop great artists, craftspeople, cooks, and more while enjoying delicious St. Ambrose beverages and food. 1-7pm.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market at 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) between Benzonia and Frankfort. 2-6pm.

Yoga in the barn at Iron Fish Distillery with Amanda Richelle. Bring your own mat. No need to pre-register. Cost is \$10/person. 5:30-6:30pm.

Tuesdays

Gentle Yoga Class led by Leah Davis, 200 YTT Certified. Limited class size. Bring your own mat, water bottle, towel. Donations are appreciated. For more info, call the Interlochen Public Library at 231-276-6767. 9am.

Get Hooked: Yarn Therapy. Bring your own project to work on. All levels welcome. Limited group size. Interlochen Public Library. 10:30am-12:30pm.

Wednesdays

Art with Heart: Bring your supplies and explore your creativity with painting, drawing, coloring, jewelry making or anything else you can imagine. Interlochen Public Library. 10am-12pm

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

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. Read to Chaz and Denny, therapy dogs! 1-5pm.

Storm Riders Cycling Club: Join the rides every Wednesday, or just those that you can make! Explore rotating sections around Frankfort and Elberta. Rides will begin and end at Stormcloud Brewing Company in downtown Frankfort.

If you are a runner, walker, or wanna-be runner, then "Run Benzie" is the group for you! We are a group of runners who meet at Five Shores Brewing in Beulah. Some of us run, some walk, and others do a combination of walk/run. We just like being outdoors and moving. Join us every Wednesday at 6pm. Join the "Run Benzie" group on Facebook to learn more.

Bill Frary plays live at St. Ambrose Cellars. 5:30-8:30pm.

Thursdays

Elberta Farmers' Market: Featuring vendors that have grown and produced their own products in our five adjoining counties of Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Manistee, and Wexford. Each week, local farmers and

artisans offer seasonal fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, maple syrup, honey, breads, granola, treats, teas, salves, soaps, and more. Waterfront Park. 8am-12pm.

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. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the studio. Price includes: 25 pounds of clay, glaze, and firings. 3:30-6:30pm.

Thursdays with Wink and his musical genius. St. Ambrose Cellars. 5:30-8:30pm.

ZUMBA on Thursdays starting July 15. The community is invited to participate in this dance fitness program led by Karen McLain. Donations are appreciated. Interlochen Public Library. 6:30-7:30pm

Fridays

Online Pre-School Story Time with Miss Désirée of the Benzonia Township Library. Videos drop on the website BenzoniaLibrary.org/Story-Time-With-Miss-Desiree at 10:30am but can be viewed any time. Each week, you can enjoy an exciting story; each month, there is a craft activity, and you can participate in fun songs and activities! There are a limited number of fun craft kits available for curbside pick-up at the library. Call 231-882-4111 with questions.

Karaoke and Shooting Star Entertainment with DJ Shawny T. A prize for everyone that sings! Fallen Timbers, located at 13901 US-31 between Honor and Interlochen. 7-11pm.

Mineral Springs Concerts in the Park in Frankfort. 7pm.

Saturdays

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

Yoga at Lake Ann Brewing Company: Who doesn't love yoga and beer? Join Kelly every Saturday morning for an hour-long yoga class on the back lawn. (No classes on June 12 or June 19.) Cost is \$10. Bring a yoga mat and water. 11am-12pm.

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.

Sundays

Interlochen Farmers' Market at 2112 M-137, the parking lot for the shopping center on the corner. 9am-2pm.

Paintball/Airsoft open play, put on by TC Paintball North. Registration begins at 10:30am; chronograph and team selection at 11:30am. Games begin at 12pm, with the last game played at 4:30pm. Located at 8257 No 1 Road in Copemish.

Celebrate The Fourth

FRANKFORT EVENTS
Carnival Opens at 10am (open July 1-5) – Open Space Park
Art in the Park begins at 10am – Mineral Springs Park
Sand Castle Sculpture Contest at 12pm – Frankfort Beach
FIREWORKS at dusk (about 10:30pm) – Frankfort Beach

BEULAH EVENTS
Firecracker 5k Run at 8am – Beulah Pavillion
1-Mile Family Walk/Run (free!) at 9am – Beulah Pavillion
Kids Games & Face-Painting from 10:30am-12pm – Beulah Park
Coin Hunt at 12:30pm - Beulah Beach
Parade begins at 1:30pm – S. Benzie Boulevard
Music in the Park at 7pm.
FIREWORKS at dusk (about 10:30pm) – Beulah Beach
(Alternate rain date: July 5th)

ON DECK

Thursday, July 1
Beulah Music in the Park featuring Jazz North. 7pm.

Thursday, July 1
Luke Woltanski plays at Stormcloud Brewing Company's pub in downtown Frankfort. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 1
Open Mic Night at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 7-9pm.

Thursday-Monday, July 1-4
4th of July Medallion Hunt: Clues handed out at the Frankfort-Elberta Chamber Office every day at 9am.

Thursday-Tuesday, July 1-5
Frankfort Carnival: Games, rides and food at the Open Space Park.

Friday, July 2
Mineral Springs Concerts in the Park begin! Featuring Ron Kluck, guitarist. 7pm.

Saturday, July 3
Five Benzie County Residents will compete for the glory and the cash prize for the first ever Cabbage-Eating Competition. Who will eat the most cooked cabbage in three minutes?!? Check out the action live at The Cabbage Shed. 3pm.

Tuesday, July 6
Awesome Distraction plays at Stormcloud Brewing Company. 7-9pm.

Wednesday, July 7
Cousin Curtiss left a successful teaching career in Alaska in 2015 to pursue music full time and has never looked back. Shortly after committing himself to road life, his life and story was discovered and featured by *Business Insider*, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *Redbull*, *Fox News*, *MSNBC*, *Daily Mail UK*, and many more. Years later, he continues to turn heads wherever he plays. The journey that started in dive bars has grown to festival appearances

around the United States, such as Salmonfest, New West Fest, Hoxeyville, Chickenstock, Mile of Music, and more. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 8
Beulah Music in the Park featuring Jake Allen. 7pm.

Saturday, July 10
Beulah Art Fair. 10am-5pm.

Sunday, July 11
4th Annual Youth Beach Volleyball Tournament on the Frankfort beach: 2 vs 2, ages 10-18. Hosted by NorthShore Volleyball. Visit northshorevb.com/beach-volleyball/ for more information. Registration closes July 9th. Check-in starts at 8am. Play begins at 9am. Email jordanbbates@gmail.com for more information.

Tuesday, July 13
Ukulele Program, featuring the Society of Traverse Regional Ukelele Musicians (STRUM). The community is invited to this free musical program. They will meet the second Tuesday of the month at the Interlochen Public Library. Listen, learn, & play! 6:30pm.

Thursday, July 15
Interlochen Public Library Hosts a Four-Part Book Discussion Series: Long Road to Recovery. This series is about recovery from addiction. Featuring a different book each session with a group discussion. *High Achiever* by Tiffany Jenkins will be discussed this time. Books are provided free to community members who attend and participate in the group discussion. Books can be picked up at Interlochen Public Library. Refreshments and child care provided. 7pm.

Too Much Music to List
Please check out individual websites and Facebook event posts to find all the local music. St. Ambrose Cellars, Stormcloud Brewing Company, Iron Fish Distillery, The Cabbage Shed, and Lake Ann Brewing Company all host some pretty impressive musicians--there is something pretty much every day of the week!!



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Between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.**

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The Betsie Current

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Painted Lady

Continued from page 1

around 1891, burned. The painted lady thus made the journey—appropriately by rail—from Thompsonville to her second home at Copemish’s own diamond crossing (one railroad ran to Manistee), where she continued to greet passengers for the next 48 years.

As the lumber era came to a close, and automobiles became more numerous and affordable after World War II, train services diminished—as did many small towns along their routes. By the early 1960s, the Ann Arbor Railroad maintained a freight operation through Copemish but no longer offered passenger train services.

So it was that, in August 1965, the de-commissioned depot made the 50-mile trip on a flatbed trailer to the village of Glen Arbor. The painted lady—a bit tattered, but still recognizable in her simplified ball-and-dowel spandrel brackets, projecting gabled ticket bay, and tall, two-over-two windows—was the ultimate antiquing find for Virginia Hinton and Charlene Baker, owners of The Country Store.

Virginia Hinton taught at The Leelanau School in Glen Arbor; she was also a certified gemologist and an early mentor of local jewelry designer Becky Thatcher. According to a newspaper article of the time, The Country Store was a gift shop “designed in the manner of an old-fashioned store, ... furnished with original antiques, including a potbellied stove, cracker barrel, coffee mill, and an old cash register.” Despite the lack of railroad tracks, the painted lady from Copemish would fit right in, welcoming the many visitors who would exclaim over her well-formed timbers, beadboard paneling, and colorful embellishments.

In 1980, Donna Burgan bought the complex and created Wildflowers: a gift shop, garden center, and design studio that flourished for 40 years; a tranquil oasis adjoining the village’s increasingly bustling tourism.

As Wildflowers grew, so too did the visual clutter surrounding the painted lady, obscuring her Carpenter Gothic-inspired details behind the main store building, extensive gardens, landscaping inventory, and Christmas decor. At some point, whether as

History of Painted Ladies

“Painted ladies” are Victorian and Edwardian* houses and buildings that have been repainted—starting in the 1960s—in at least three colors that embellish or enhance their architectural details. The term was first used in 1978 by writers Elizabeth Pomada and Michael Larsen to describe San Francisco’s Victorian houses.

Although multi-color decoration was common during the era, the colors used on these houses now are not considered to be historical precedent: according to Wikipedia, there were about 48,000 houses in the Victorian and Edwardian styles that had been built in San Francisco between 1849 and 1915, and many were painted in bright colors.

“Everything that is loud is in fashion... if the upper stories are not of red or blue ... they are painted up into uncouth panels of yellow and brown...” wrote one newspaper critic in 1885.

Many San Francisco mansions were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake, but thousands of the more modest homes in the western and southern parts of the city survived, and many of these houses were painted battleship gray during the early part of the 20th century, thanks to surplus Navy paint from the world wars.

Then, in 1963, San Francisco artist Butch Kardum began combining intense blues and greens on his Italianate-style Victorian house. Despite that his choice in paint colors was criticized by some, other neighbors began to copy the bright colors on their own houses; Kardum became a color designer, and he and other artists/colorists began to transform dozens of gray houses into Painted Ladies.

By the 1970s, the colorist movement, as it was called, had changed entire streets and neighborhoods, not just in San Francisco, but across the United States.

**The change from Victorian to Edwardian style occurred on the death of Queen Victoria in 1901.*

part of The Country Store or Wildflowers, extra doors were cut into her original side façades, and additional alterations were created—perhaps necessary to a retail business but not in keeping with the lady’s historical harmonious appearance.

Burgan decided to retire in 2019, and eventually the property was sold to a developer with plans to build condominiums on the site. Wildflower’s devoted customers made their final pilgrimages to the shop. Among them was Cynthia Badan, a longtime seasonal resident whose parents had first introduced her to Glen Arbor and who had nurtured her own decades-long love affair with the blue waters of Sleeping Bear Bay.

“My parents, Richard and Mimsy Harder, worked at The Leelanau School,” she explains. “On every special occasion, my mom used to take me to Wildflowers. Last year, her birthday was coming up. I thought I’d get one more thing from Wildflowers

before it closed—it was the end of an era.”

That “one more thing” ended up being pretty unconventional—as Badan strolled the grounds, she came upon a building she had never noticed before.

“I think it was where Donna [Burgan] had her Christmas displays—but I’m a summer person, and I’d never been in there,” Badan says. “The sales girl said, ‘Everything is for sale: the actual building is for sale!’”

Baden felt that she could not pass this up. “I called my [adult] kids; three of them were in Glen Arbor,” she recalls. “I asked them to come over and look at the depot. I had a crazy idea.”

For 25 years, Badan, along with her kids and then-husband, had had a place on Sleeping Bear Bay. Lake Michigan was her touchstone, a place she had fallen in love with when her parents came to The Leelanau School in the mid-1980s. Her father was assistant headmaster and development director, while her mother worked

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in the alumni relations office.

“They lived on Faculty Row, but they knew everyone in town, too,” Baden recalls. “They’d go to the ‘Board Meetings’ at the WAG [Western Ave Grill] every Thursday. They knew Norm Wheeler, the Rockwoods.”

The educators’ previous career moves had taken them from New York to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands when Badan was just four years old.

“Every day for eight years, I could look out the window of my school in St. Croix and see that blue water,” she says. “In eighth grade, we moved to Lake Forest, Illinois, on Lake Michigan, but the colors and the feel of the water were completely different. When I was in college, Dad took the job in Glen Arbor, and he sent me pictures of the lake here. I was like, ‘This is unbelievable—it’s just like St. Croix.’”

Badan continues:

“My brother and I are both very attached to water; the lake and the ocean. In St. Croix, our parents wanted to give us kids a cultural experience, but their friends and their parents gave them a lot of push back at the time. Now, they live in Maine. They don’t return to the old places where they’ve lived—they’ve only come back to Glen Arbor a couple of times—but they’re happy to think that they helped to create a place for us.”

In Northern Michigan, Baden feels a deep connection to sand, waves, and sky, like those in her Caribbean memories, and she values a place to nurture that sense of belonging for her own children, as well.

Five years ago, the family needed to sell their home on Sleeping Bear Bay, and it was very emotional. Since then, they had been renting for several weeks each summer—which can be quite expensive for a middle-school French teacher.

At Wildflowers, on that fateful day last year, Baden’s crazy idea took shape.

“What if my kids and I bought this [depot], and put it on a little scrap of land, and put into it all the money we would have spent on an expensive summer rental for the next five years?” she says. “I told Donna [Burgan] the whole story, and she loved it. We worked out a deal, we shook on it, I gave her five dollars in earnest money.”

Last fall, Badan also closed on an undeveloped half-acre of land situated near the oxbow of the Crystal River, where Bay Lane meets M-22 and County Road 675. The painted lady carries a tiny footprint that fits well in the site—only 680 square feet, and Badan will have to add just shy of 400 square feet to meet Glen Arbor Township zoning regulations for a single-family dwelling. But she is thrilled with her family’s new adventure—three of her four children are involved in the project—and the chance to create even more connections with the Glen Arbor community.

This spring, builder Tim Newman of Kasson Contracting in Maple City moved the historic depot a fourth—and hopefully, final—time from the Wildflowers site to her new location. The roof had to be removed in order for the lady to make her stately way along M-22, and a rubber membrane was installed to keep weather out, but the graceful rafters with their distinctive pitch will be reinstalled this fall.

Newman has already removed later additions—like puzzling barn-style doors—and restored the window openings, whose original trim caps could still be seen above the crude alterations.

“He is a real treasure,” Baden says of Newman. “A real master craftsman; his handshake is his word.”

Architect Robin Johnson—who, with her husband, Robert Foulkes, and Cherry Republic owner Bob Sutherland developed the New Neighborhood in Empire 30 years ago—is assisting with the vision for restoring and rejuvenating the painted lady.

“She had helped us with our old bay

cottage, and we reconnected last summer,” Badan says. “Robin loves historic buildings. She is an invaluable resource; taking the space that’s there, keeping what is good, preserving the charm. The building is so thick, so solid, with elegant proportions and details, like the brackets. With its 14- to 16-foot ceilings, it feels so much bigger than it is.”

Of the proposed plans, Badan says:

“At first, we had a very different vision. But now we’re back to the simple plan. The building is basically three rooms: we’ll keep the waiting room exactly as it was—we sealed up where the doors and windows had been moved around; someone had lowered the floor in one area for some reason. That will be the living room. The middle room, where the ticket booth was, is pretty much intact, and we’re keeping it that way. Maybe the future dining room? Keep the original windows, figure out how to make the building energy efficient. The room at the end—luggage room or cafeteria or whatever it was—we’re not sure yet what we’ll do there. The additional 400 square feet will be in the back.”

She laughs: “Now it will shine again!”

*A version of this article first published in the **Glen Arbor Sun**, a Leelanau County-based semi-sister publication to **The Betsie Current**. The author wishes to thank Charles Kraus of the Benzie Area Historical Society for his extensive research on the history of Thompsonville.*

Back in our October 8, 2020, issue, **The Betsie Current published Kraus’s article about Diamond Crossing in Thompsonville; additionally, we have previously published a series of articles on the railroads, the car ferry, and their significant contributions to the area’s tourism industry, as well as a profile of James M. Ashley—former congressman from Ohio, former governor of the Montana Territory, noted abolitionist, and member of the radical wing of the Republican Party—whose post-Civil War dream was to begin a cross-lake rail car ferry service that would bypass the rail congestion of Chicago. Read the series in our online archives.*



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GTB

Continued from page 1

ment with the Anderson Group and developer Steven Smith, is focused on bringing more retail commerce to the Village at Grand Traverse (VGT), near Meijer in Acme. The planned development is being designed to have a pedestrian-friendly “downtown look” and is slated to break ground in late 2022.

In addition, the GTB is taking an active role in expanding access to broadband by installing underground cables in Leelanau County and coordinating with local units of government to put in glass fiber.

Another major financial contribution to the region comes as a result of the GTB’s “2 percent allocation,” part of the 1994 Consent Decree, signed with the State of Michigan under Governor John Engler. This decree called for 2 percent of the GTB’s video gaming revenue to be set aside to provide grants to local units of government, which may be requested for infrastructure, school funding, fire and rescue, or other local needs. The funds are allocated based on applications sent to the Tribal Council, with allocation amounts varying from tens of thousands to up to hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending upon the request and the performance of the tribe’s casinos.

For example, in January 2021, in the first of two annual allocations, the GTB distributed \$742,059.95 of gaming revenue to 50 local units of government. Since the 2 percent allocation began in 1994, the GTB has allocated nearly \$42.2 million to local organizations.

As an example of how these funds benefit Benzie County, Arroyo shared some of the GTB allocations from 2018:

- **Benzie Conservation District:** \$2,435.21 for the purchase of two laptops and accessories to help complete the study of invasive species.
- **Benzie County Office of Emergency Management:** \$16,128.00 to purchase two positive pressure pneumatic ventilators.
- **Benzie County Sheriff’s Department:** \$10,580.00 to purchase a fingerprinting system.
- **Benzie County Veteran’s Affairs:** \$52,230.76 for construction of a pavilion.
- **Benzonía Township:** \$8,000 for Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN) food pantry effort.

Strong Leadership Paves the Way

Those still learning about the Grand Traverse Band may be surprised by the extensive nature of the tribe’s internal operations. In addition to its wide-ranging business interests, the GTB has its own criminal justice system, including judges and police; its own healthcare system; and sizable environmental programs.

In addition, the GTB provides educational services for its members, including Kitchi Minogining Tribal School, a state recognized non-public school that operates four classrooms in Benzonía, Charlevoix, Peshawbestown, and Traverse City. While the majority of GTB students attend public schools for K-12, the tribal schools offer an alternative to students and parents who desire one. The tribal schools’ curriculum is in line with the public schools, and some students attend both options at various times during their academic careers.

With all its many responsibilities, the Tribal Council is fortunate to be guided by a detailed Constitution, created four decades ago by former leaders who laid the groundwork for the future of the tribe.

“We had outstanding leaders—including Ardith “Dodie” Chambers, the first interim chairperson and Joseph C. “Buddy” Raphael, first elected Chairman. Chambers and Raphael worked together to have the GTB reaffirmed by the federal government as a sovereign nation in 1980. After all the losses we had experienced up until then, their focus was on providing our members with a chance at life,” Arroyo explains.

The current leaders of the GTB do not take this legacy lightly.

“Those of us who are in leadership positions now have the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom and dedication of our past leaders,” Arroyo says. “We follow the Niizhwaaswi Gmsroomsinaanig Kinoomaagewinan—the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are a set of principles that guide and assist Anishinaabe through life. The teachings are Gwekaadiziwin (Honesty), Dibadendiziwin (Humility), Debwewin (Truth), Nbwaakaawin (Wisdom), Zaagidowin (Love), Mnaadenimowin (Respect), Aakadeewin (Bravery).”

The Future Looks Bright

Arroyo feels optimistic about the positive direction of our current state and national leadership, for both the Grand Traverse Band and for Indian Country, in general.

“Governor Whitmer is more willing to work with Michigan tribes than some of her predecessors have been, and we are very encouraged by what we are seeing from President Biden,” Arroyo says. “His appointment of Deb Haaland [of Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico] as Secretary of the Interior is a great step forward in creating a Cabinet that looks more like America. I believe Secretary Haaland will do an outstanding job for all Americans.”

When asked what he wished that non-Native people better understood about Native American lives, Arroyo did not hesitate to respond:

“We have faced a lot of challenges as a people. There are many things in the past that were never addressed properly. Though some may believe otherwise, we have been here for all of history, and understanding our history is crucial to understanding who we are. We have had so much taken from us. Our treaties—which are legal contracts—were overlooked, changed at the last minute without our knowledge, or simply not honored. If you read our Constitution and look at our treaties, you’ll gain a much better understanding of what we are all about.”

As with any relationship, communication is the key.

“We are so fortunate to have had strong leaders who fought for our right to self-determination, but there is still so much to be done,” Arroyo says. “If you reach out to us, and have a willingness to know the truth, we are more than willing to share. It means a lot to have people that are willing to stand alongside us.”

Learn more about the tribe at GTBIndians.org online. All endorsed local units of government are eligible to apply for 2% funding, and the application form can be found at the tribe’s website, as well.



The Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians refer to themselves as Anishinaabek or People from the Three Fires; they primarily speak the eastern dialect of Anishinaabemowin. Image courtesy of GTBIndians.org.

Tribe’s Swift Response to Pandemic

When the pandemic first hit back in March 2020, the Grand Traverse Band acted quickly to close both their casino operations in Leelanau and Grand Traverse counties, as well as all their tribal government offices. The casinos remained closed for two and a half months, and the government offices are still closed to the public, although staff has returned to the office.

Moreover, the tribe—which employs both tribal members and non-members in their multiple business and other operations—offered employees more support than many other workers saw during the first difficult weeks of the pandemic.

“We paid our casino, hotel, and government employees wages and health benefits from March through the beginning of June, though our operations were closed and those that were working at all were working from home,” says David Arroyo, chair of the Tribal Council. “We also kept COVID-testing going during this period, so that employees were tested on a regular schedule. This helped us mitigate the spread.”

During the early weeks of the pandemic, the tribe also provided members with “care packages,” which included over-the-counter medicines, sanitation supplies, and simple foods for those with COVID symptoms and their caregivers.

In June 2020, the casinos reopened at 25 percent capacity. They have now returned to their regular business hours and are operating at 100 percent capacity, with all machines back in place. Masks are optional for vaccinated patrons and smoking is still not allowed.

“We have followed CDC and State of Michigan guidelines throughout the pandemic, and as a result, our numbers are much better than they would have been otherwise,” Arroyo says. “Our cases skewed younger than those in the general population, with more than 60 percent of cases occurring with members aged 39 and under. As of mid-June 2021, we’ve had 162 cumulative positive cases as tested at the Grand Traverse Band Health Clinic, 158 recovered cases, and one death.”

The GTB is also making strong progress in getting members vaccinated.

“As of late June, we had administered 3,681 doses to tribal members over 16, their households, and Grand Traverse Band employees and their households,” Arroyo says. “There are those who, for whatever reason, don’t want to be vaccinated, but we are working to share information and answer their questions, so that they may reconsider. We are also offering vaccination clinics at several of our locations.”

The GTB does a good job of communicating with its members and employees about the pandemic and other issues of concern via its website and other communication platforms. For instance, a virtual public forum, held virtually on April 28, 2021, was presented by Mary J. Owen, MD, (Tlingit), University of Minnesota Medical School’s director of the Center of American Indian and Minority Health. The forum was designed to answer questions about the vaccine and educate participants about the importance of being vaccinated.

In addition, the GTB is conducting a follow-up survey among members and employees to better understand what respondents experienced during the pandemic and to modify their response to future health crises accordingly.

During the challenges of 2020, the GTB was able to enhance its ability to respond to future emergencies through a \$900,000 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant was received in late August 2020, and it provided funding to install generators in five of the tribe’s facilities—the Community Center, the Strongheart Recreational Center, the Medicine Lodge, and its satellite offices in Benzonia and Charlevoix. These facilities can now be used as emergency shelters during a natural disaster caused by weather, power outages, or other emergency conditions.

“We learned so much from dealing with this pandemic,” Arroyo says. “I believe we were pretty effective in limiting the spread. I am so grateful for our health director and other leaders who took action quickly. Thanks to the foundation they created, we will be much better prepared in the future.”

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Check out our website
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ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE

Celebrating the dynamic
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A Letter from the Editors on our new, upcoming publication.

The Betsie Current began with a simple idea. Tell good stories. That's it. Simple.

The question became: how do we do that? Over the years, we've stayed true to one guiding principle: does this story create community? If the answer was "no," we didn't cover it. Again, it's just that simple.

Some people will tell you that the printed word is a dying industry. But we haven't felt that. In fact, we've seen the opposite trend: the more we write about issues that matter to people in this community—the stories that make us all feel a little more connected to one another and to this place—the more reach *The Betsie Current* has. Our readership continues to grow each year, so much so that we recently decided to increase from 12 issues annually to 16. And now we're gearing up to expand even further in 2021.

This year marks one decade of *The Betsie Current*, and we feel like that's something to celebrate. Sure, we'd like to have a face-to-face party, and maybe the pandemic will be under control by this fall so we can do that. But in the meantime, we're wanting to honor this special occasion in print, too. So, in addition to our 16 newspaper issues, we'll be publishing a 10th-anniversary glossy-paged magazine with your favorite stories from our nine previous years and some new stories for 2021.

We've really honed this craft by interviewing interesting people, by covering popular events, by looking into our area's unique history, by printing colorful pages, and by keeping this resource free for anyone to pick up.

We hope that when you see this cover on shelves soon, you'll pick one up. And if you're interested in advertising with us, there's still time: send an email to ads@betsiecurrent.com or call 231-649-3988. Either way, whether you read it or whether you advertise in it, we hope that you'll consider joining us in this new printed endeavor.

-Jordan Bates & Aubrey Ann Parker

Photo by Elijah Browning/Elijah Fly Photography.

A Three-hour Tour

Tours to North Manitou lighthouse crib begin

From Staff Reports

Five years ago, when four couples—Todd and Natalie Buckley, Jake and Suzanne Kaberle, Dave and Sherry McWilliam, and Daniel and Anna Oginsky—won the bid to acquire the North Manitou Shoal Lighthouse, commonly referred to as “the crib,” they set an ambitious goal to restore the lighthouse and begin to offer tours by July 4



The North Manitou Shoal Light Station was completed in 1935. First operated by the United States Lighthouse Service and later by the United States Coast Guard, which manned it until 1980, the light station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. However, the structure stood vacant and relatively uncared for until 2016 (top photo), when it was purchased at auction by North Manitou Light Keepers, a nonprofit organization, after being deemed surplus by the Federal Government. Over the past five years, the Light Keepers have worked to restore the structure, and tours began in June 2021 (bottom photo). Photos courtesy of North Manitou Light Keepers.

of this year. The group accomplished their goal with two weeks to spare.

On June 19, 2021, two team members led four tourists on the first official tour of the crib. A larger group will visit on July 3 and on most Saturdays through the summer. Trips leave from Leland harbor on a charter fishing boat, captained by Jim Muñoz. At this point, tours are open to members who have signed up to support the North Manitou Light Keepers’ restoration effort.

The North Manitou Shoal Light Station is an offshore lighthouse in Lake Michigan that was completed in 1935. It marks a shallow shoal in the Manitou Passage, an important maritime channel. First operated by the United States Lighthouse Service and later by the United States Coast Guard, which manned it until 1980, the light station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. However, the structure stood vacant and relatively uncared for until

2016, when it was purchased at auction by North Manitou Light Keepers, a nonprofit organization, after being deemed surplus by the Federal Government. It remains an active aid to navigation with automated solar-powered equipment, maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard.

“Tours this year are pretty well filled up,” says Dan Oginsky, Light Keepers board president. “We’re offering them to existing members: the tours are what people have been waiting for.”

The Light Keepers will offer a special tour to the crib aboard the *Mishe-Mokwa*—the ferry which transports travelers to the Manitou islands—on Friday, July 23, at 6:30 p.m., following the group’s annual rally and information session at 4 p.m. at Leland’s Main Street Gallery. That cruise costs \$25 per person.

According to Oginsky, the typical tour lasts about two to three hours and includes approximately 60 minutes at the crib. Visitors climb out of the boat and scale a 20-foot vertical ladder to the lighthouse deck. The tour includes a description of the lighthouse and its history, plus a trip to the lantern house, which sits 60 feet above the water level and offers tremendous views of Lake Michigan and the mainland shoreline.

“I’d encourage people to join and become a member,” Oginsky says. “When you become a member, we like to say, ‘You own a lighthouse.’ You get t-shirts. You support the effort. You get direct messages and mailings from us. And it’s easier to get on our list to do tours.”

Earlier this year, the Light Keepers received a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program grant from the State Historical Preservation Office to replace the old decking and stop water intrusion and structural damage to the crib, the group reported in a March press release.

“Phase 1 of our restoration includes making the lighthouse safe, clean, and suitable to visit,” Oginsky says. “We cleaned up 30 years of bird guano, gave it a fresh paint job, took out and restored all 22 rectangular windows, and replaced all glass in lantern houses.”

The next step is to replace the Level 3 top deck, where steel plates covering the deck are corroded and water damaged. The third step is to replace the sea doors, which are welded shut at the water level. Lower lake levels allow boats to one day pull up to the door and walk straight into the lighthouse basement.

Phase 2 of the restoration will include installing mechanical systems inside, so the Light Keepers can offer overnight and weekend stays in the future; their hope is to ultimately turn the lighthouse into an inn that offers overnight lodging. The crib already contains four guestrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a common area.

“Someday, it’s going to be a really comfortable place to go stay for a weekend in America’s most beautiful place,” Oginsky says.

To become a member, visit NorthManitouLightKeepers.org online. Follow the group at “North Manitou Light Keepers” on Facebook and @northmanitoulight on Instagram.

A version of this article first published in the *Glen Arbor Sun*, a Leelanau County-based semi-sister publication to *The Betsie Current*.

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