

A Les Cheneaux Tradition for 87 Years, Chief Mackinac Featured in Aug. 13 Show

By Amy Polk

When *Chief Mackinac* won the Best of Show and People's Choice awards at last year's Les Cheneaux Antique Wooden Boat show, new owner John Allen said he learned the importance of the boat to local residents.

"What was amazing was the number of people who came up to me and shared stories and remembrances of the boat with me," he said.

Chief Mackinac is one of the feature boats in this year's boat show, to be held Saturday, August 13.

John and Becky Allen of Gull Lake, Minnesota, and Naples, Florida, bought the launch last year and plan this fall to take it to Gull Lake, where they share a seasonal cottage with their five children.

Chief Mackinac was known as *Molly* for 85 years of its 87-year history in the Les Cheneaux Islands. The 32-foot, 1918 custom Consolidated launch first arrived here around 1919 or 1920, delivered new to the Hardy family of Chicago, which owned a summer place on Marquette Island near Hessel. The boat was used to transport people and provisions between the mainland and the island. It was subsequently owned by the Seiberling family and Ray Ackerman, and then disappeared into storage in 1965.

The Seiberlings owned the boat for approximately 30 years and the family's memories of the it and its former operator, John Osogwin,

are colorful.

Bonnie Stewart Mickelson, author of the cookbook, "Hollyhocks and Radishes," recalls when her uncle, Karnie "T.K." Seiberling, bought the boat from the Hardys in 1939 for family use at their camp, "SunSands" on Marquette Island.

"John Osogwin had been the caretaker there for years, so it really became his boat to use for hauling people, supplies, and groceries, and to take all of us kids fishing, which remains among our favorite memories," Mrs. Mickelson said. "John knew all the secret fishing spots, and we never failed to bring home a batch of perch for breakfast or supper."

She remembers when she and seven other young family members caught more than 200 perch from the boat.

"There were at least eight of us in the *Molly*," she said. "We used bamboo poles in those days, with minnows for bait. We were catching them so fast that day, they were being flung into faces and flapping all over the bottom of the boat, amidst screams and laughter and John just sitting there behind the wheel with a big grin on his face and his shoulders shaking, trying to hold in his own laughter."

Molly was well used by the Seiberlings, and their favorite outings in the boat were to places like Beavertail Point for picnics and blueberry picking or to Mackinac Island "for just the experience" of it.

"The *Molly* was a superb boat to



The *Chief Mackinac* cruises in Hessel Bay.

ride in, with its hull and prow designed to cut through the biggest waves. But, too, John (Osogwin) was a superb boatman, so we always felt safe with him in almost any sea," Mrs. Mickelson said. "John's significance to the family was tremendous. My mother and her brothers had grown up with him at SunSands, and he was dearly loved by us all. He taught me almost all I know about the mysteries of the woods, and shared wonderful secrets, such as the hiding places for stonefish and brown leeches."

Mrs. Mickelson immortalized Mr. Osogwin by referring to him several times in "Hollyhocks and

Radishes," including a sketch of him preparing planked whitefish at SunSands.

"He taught us the method as he had been taught through his Chippewa heritage," she added. "John was a grandson of the last chief of the Chippewas in Les Cheneaux."

Mrs. Mickelson's cousin, Ethel "Prechie" Fox, gave several photographs of Mr. Osogwin and the boat to the Mertaugh family, which

restored the boat, as well as her flagpole, that had been tucked away at SunSands all those years, Mrs. Mickelson said.

Jim Mertaugh and his sons, Tom and Dan, all operate Classic and Antique Boats of Hessel, which completed the restoration.

"It was completely restored, from keel to flag pole, though most of the wood, about 99 percent of it, is original," Jim Mertaugh said.

That fact is impressive, consid-

ering the age of the boat and how often it was used during the first 40 years of its life. The only thing they replaced was the floor, which was more a cosmetic improvement than a structural one, Mr. Mertaugh added.

Most of the work included polishing and varnishing the darkly stained, chocolate brown hull and polishing the brass and copper hardware.

"Every piece on it is original, except for the transom, floorboards, and one sideboard," Mr. Allen said.

The boat's engine was replaced sometime after World War II, probably in 1946 or 1947, with a 115-horsepower Chrysler, which remains in the boat. The Mertaughs believe its first engine was a 70-horsepower Speedway, installed by the boat's builders, Consolidated Launch Company.

Mr. Allen found out about the boat through a tip Dan Mertaugh passed on to Steve Northius of Cedarville.

Mr. Allen said he purchased the boat without seeing it, "because Dan recognized it as being a very distinct and unique boat."

"We needed a launch, and we had bought another boat through Steve, so we decided to go ahead

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Birge Preserve in Hessel Expands by 160 Acres

By Amy Polk

The Birge Nature Preserve, named for the late Oliver and Edna Birge, is a growing preserve on Point Brulee, approximately two miles west of Hessel. The Birges donated the original 171 acres in _____, several more parcels were added almost a decade ago, and another 160 acres were added this summer.

The preserve has 1.2 miles of water frontage on Lake Huron's Mismar Bay, considered some of the most biologically productive habitat in Michigan, according to Little Traverse Conservancy. A quarter-mile trail leads to Loon Lake in the center of the Point Brulee peninsula, where singing frogs bring the placid lake to life each spring.

Dominating the preserve are northern white cedar and balsam fir, which provide a home for bear, bobcat, and grouse and winter shelter for deer. Present-day explorers can see beaver, bald eagle, and osprey. Lady slipper,

gentian, aster, marsh marigold, Indian paintbrush, and iris grow there. Dozens of tree swallow boxes are posted along the entranceway.

"The Birge Preserve protects incredible natural resources and has become a popular destination for environmental education programs with St. Ignace, Cedarville, and Pickford schools," said Ty Ratliff, land protection specialist for Little Traverse Conservancy.

There are no roads or improvements on this property, Mr. Ratliff said, except an old wheel road that crosses the property that Mr. Birge said is part of the oldest road in the area.

In 1998 and 1999, the Conservancy bought two adjacent parcels, including the "Jack Mertaugh Addition," which gives the preserve Lake Huron access.

This year, the Little Traverse Conservancy purchased an additional 160 acres adjacent to the Birge Nature Preserve with a

grant from Mr. and Mrs. John A. Woollam and the J.A. Woollam Foundation, Inc., bringing the total size to 435 acres.

The 160 acres was previously owned by Bruce Wallace and Raven McCrory, who wanted to sell their property, but were interested in land conservation, Mr. Ratliff said. Luckily, their land adjoined the Birge Preserve, which is part of the Conservancy's Les Cheneaux Program focus area.

"The property will be a wonderful addition to the Birge Preserve, for it adds additional habitat types, and also greatly increases the public's recreational opportunities by adding acreage that is ideal for hiking, birding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing," Mr. Ratliff said. "We encourage locals and visitors to visit and enjoy this wonderful nature preserve."

Mr. Ratliff said the land will always be available to the public

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New Postmasters Take Oath

Andy Valentine Sworn in at Naubinway Post Office



Andy Valentine (center) was sworn in by Phil Williams as the new postmaster of the Naubinway office, while his wife, Ginger Valentine, holds the Bible.

easy as my new family, the residents of Naubinway, accepted me with open arms," said Mr. Valentine. "I'm looking forward to this position."

Andy Valentine of St. Ignace, a seven-year postal employee, was sworn in as the new postmaster at the Naubinway office Friday, July 29. Phil Williams, district manager, presented the oath of office while Andy's wife, Ginger, held a Bible before more than 50 residents of Naubinway, family, friends, and fellow postal employees.

The 1981 graduate of LaSalle High School started working for the United States Post Office in 1998 as a letter carrier in Cheboygan, then worked in St. Ignace as a clerk from 1999 to May 28, 2005, when he moved to Naubinway.

"Andy is a very dedicated employee who would fill in at any postal office, and we felt he was ready for a postmaster position," said Mr. Williams.

"The adjustment was very

Jeannette Landreville Sworn in at Paradise Post Office



Jeannette Landreville of Hessel (left) is sworn in as the new Paradise postmaster Friday, July 15. Her husband, Jim, holds the Bible while Post Office Operations Manager Phil Williams of the 496-497 postal code area conducts the ceremony.

Jeannette Landreville of Hessel was sworn in as postmaster of the Paradise Post Office Friday, July 15, by Post Office Operations Manager Phil Williams. Mrs. Landreville is a six-year postal employee who formerly worked as clerk at the Mackinaw City Post Office. She also worked as the postmaster relief replacement at the Hessel Post Office.

Mrs. Landreville began her career with the United States Postal Service as a clerk in the Gaylord Processing Center.

Four Post Masters from the 497 area attended Mrs. Landreville's swearing-in ceremony. Her husband, Jim, held the Bible while she was sworn in. Their children, Karen, Alicia, Nathaniel, Daniel, Sarah, and Matthew also attended the ceremony, along with several Paradise residents.

Michael Snell To Perform August 4 in St. Ignace

Michael Snell will perform Thursday, August 4, at 7 p.m. at the St. Ignace marina as part of the free Bayside Live! concert series.

Mr. Snell plays folk music with an easy listening country influence. His music is influenced by John Denver, James Taylor, and Harry Chapin. He has been playing banjo and guitar since the age of 14. He is a member of Nashville Songwriters Association International and has spent several summers in Nashville taking part in the group's musical programs.

At right: Michael Snell



Local Band Crazy Moose Featured August 10

Crazy Moose will perform at a Locals by the Bay concert Wednesday, August 10, at 7 p.m. at the St. Ignace Marina. The band features three St. Ignace performers, Mike Pieron, Mark Halvorsen, and Sarah Halvorsen. Their music is a combination of American traditional, old time gospel, country, and original numbers. Mr. Pieron plays acoustic and electric guitar and comes from a broad musical background. Mr. Halvorsen plays acoustic six string guitar, harmonica, and is the lead singer and songwriter. Ms. Halvorsen plays flute and percussion.

Fiddle players who can play by ear are invited to bring their instruments and play along.

The Locals by the Bay concert is offered free each Wednesday evening to showcase local musical talent.



Mark Halvorsen, Sarah Halvorsen, and Mike Pieron are "Crazy Moose."

Motorcyle Group To Honor Soldiers, Vets Fri.

Forgotten Eagles Stopping at St. Ignace Memorial on Cross-State Ride

A band of motorcyclists is riding across the state of Michigan to raise awareness of soldiers missing in action and raising funds for military veterans, and will be in St. Ignace to pay tribute to service men in Mackinac County at the veterans' memorial at the County Courthouse Friday,

August 5.

The Forgotten Eagles of Michigan, a motorcycle group that promotes public awareness of soldiers who have served or are serving in a war, began riding the morning of Wednesday, August 3, at Bay Mills Resort and Casino.

The group started the Ride Around Michigan tour last year. The Ride takes motorcycle riders through each of the 83 counties in Michigan. At various county seats, the group will hold remembrance ceremonies to honor all those who have served and who are serving in the military today.