



GUNFLINT TIMES

THE GUNFLINT TRAIL
Historical Society

VOLUME VIII

GUNFLINT TRAIL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2012

NOTES FROM CHIK-WAUK

Admission Changes

The GTHS Board of Trustees voted last October to increase Chik-Wauk admission fees to \$3 per individual and \$7 per family. (Please note, "family" is now defined as parents and/or guardians with children ages 18 and under.) The fee increases help support and sustain the work of Chik-Wauk and the GTHS. Gunflint Trail Historical Society members can visit the museum for free at any time and will be provided with five admission tickets to cover their guests' admissions when they renew their annual membership. Members may purchase additional admission tickets for their guests at the museum's front desk for \$2 each.



The pussywillows came early to Chik-Wauk

Public Programming

The Sunday Nature Walks and Talks program will return at 2 p.m. on Chik-Wauk's front porch on Sundays June 24 – August 26. We also plan to introduce children's activities at Chik-Wauk this summer, held at 1:30 p.m. on July 11 and 25 and August 8 and 22.

Chik-Wauk is partnering with North House Folk School for the Boreal Birding Festival held June 1-3. As part of the festival,

on Saturday, June 2, Kate Kelnberger will be leading a "Warbler Wander" on Chik-Wauk's grounds at 7 a.m. and at 2 p.m., Phyllis Sherman will present on the Common Loon on Chik-Wauk's front porch. Chik-Wauk's grounds will open at 7 a.m., June 1-3, to allow the public to do some early morning birding on the trails.

All Chik-Wauk's programming is free and open to the public. Check out Chik-Wauk's website (www.chikwauk.com) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/chikwauk) for the complete schedule.

Gift Shop Update

Since opening day, many people have expressed interest in purchasing DVDs of the short films shown on the museum's two touch screen kiosks. Thanks to a Legacy grant received this winter, we've been working with Applied Art and Technology in Des Moines to convert the entire series of 78 three-minute films to DVD format. The films have been divided onto two DVD sets: Gunflint Trail Pioneers and Colorful Characters (one disc) and Gunflint Trail Past and Current Businesses (two disc set). The DVDs are on sale in the Chik-Wauk gift shop and are a wonderful way to share the Chik-Wauk experience.

The DVDs are just a couple of several new items in this year's gift shop. We have a wide variety of items from local artisans and have worked hard to stock items that appeal to all ages and budgets.

Call for Volunteers

As always, Chik-Wauk's success hinges on volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering at Chik-Wauk this summer, contact Ada at ada@chikwauk.com or call 218-388-9915.

Ada Igoe, Manager



WANTED: MORE GUNFLINT TRAIL STORYTELLERS!

Many of you have wonderful memories of life on and along the Trail. You are invited to share a bit of your history, or that of someone you know, at one of our general membership meetings. You don't need to be a professional speaker; everyone's voice helps keep Gunflint Trail history alive.



*The Gunflint Trail under construction
Photo courtesy of the Fink family*

Storytelling dates are still open for June and September. If you are interested, contact either Fred Smith (218-388-0613) or Bob Baker Sr. (218-388-0544). Storytellers speak for about 15-20 minutes. Topics should be light and in good taste.

Frederick Smith, President

GNEISS LAKE TRAIL TO BLUEBERRY HILL

"Raspberries, blowdown and black logs . . . oh my!" This just might be the chant you hear from volunteer workers on a "new" trail at Chik-Wauk this summer.

Actually, the Gneiss Lake Trail is quite an old trail that was delisted by the U.S. Forest Service several years ago after blowdown and fire obliterated its path. The trail started at the bay opposite of the Chik-Wauk Lodge building and ran northeast to the edge of Maraboeuf Lake in the Granite River. It was about two miles long and went through a variety of forest types.



Blueberry Hill view

My fondest memory of this trail was a section of thick dark spruce bog forest with foot deep moss all around. The wind was always still in there and it made you think that perhaps "dragons might be beyond this spot." The trail also included a nasty swamp and numerous ups and downs. It was always an adventure and your reward at the end of the hike was a nice campsite on Maraboeuf Lake.

Reestablishing this trail has been on the long range plan for Chik-Wauk since the GTHS's formation. This past winter, USFS Gunflint District Ranger Dennis Neitzke gave us permission to open up the first section of the trail which includes a spur trail up to a 1638' rock knob known locally as Blueberry Hill.

Finding the old trail has been a bit of a challenge, but Jim Wiinainen was pretty

sure we could do it. He had Kyle Oberg from Cook County GSI put the data from old maps onto a GPS. Although the technology proved to be accurate, the humanoid end of it involved crawling over down trees and crashing through new brush. It was very fun to find an old blaze or two on totally blackened trees that were still standing. We also found a definite treadway through some of the trail areas. It is funny how human footsteps can be ever so permanent in some spots and in others there is no sign whatsoever.

So now what?

We have the trail flagged to the hill. Some stalwart chain-sawyers have opened up a narrow "path" so we can begin to brush out and pull stuff off the trail. During Green Up, new pines were planted to augment the natural regeneration that is coming up and some of the trees already there were released.

It will take a fair amount of work to fine tune the trail, but we will have some expert help coming in this September when a group of folks from the National Smokejumpers Association that volunteer their time to help with trail restoration come to Chik-Wauk. They are the group that did the work on the new Centennial Trail off the Kekakabic. We will also be counting on our GTHS volunteers who always come through! Already, I need to say heartfelt thanks to Mark, Andy, Ada, Chris, Jim and Tom.

I can't promise you easy blueberry picking this season, but the lure of that view will tempt some of the hardier hikers this summer. It is truly awesome.

Kathy Lande, Grounds Chair

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES!

Our loyal and generous members are the mainstay of our organization. Until now, members have been notified of renewal on the yearly anniversary of their latest membership payment.

To celebrate our members and to make renewal more convenient, we are designating June as GTHS membership month. From now on, all memberships payments received during the calendar year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) will have an expiration date of June 30th of the following year. You can renew at GunflintTrailHistoricalSociety.org.

This year, renewal notices will be sent to all members who have not already paid their 2012 dues in early June to coincide with the new Chik-Wauk season.

Kate Kelnberger, Membership Chair

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL MADE EASIER

Did I or didn't I?

If you're anything like me, you can't remember when you last paid your annual GTHS membership or when you last made a donation.

Luckily, trustee Sue Weber has set up a direct payment system so your membership and contributions can be made automatically from your credit card or bank account on a monthly basis. Just log on to the GTHS website (GunflintTrailHistoricalSociety.org), click on the "DONATE" button, and follow the step by step directions.

No more worrying "Did I or didn't I?"

Bob Baker, Sr., Vice President

2012 GTHS GENERAL MEETINGS

Please put the GTHS general meeting dates shown at the right on your calendars. All meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. at the Gunflint Lodge Conference Center. Treats are always great and the conversation excellent!

Monday, June 11

Monday, July 9

Monday, August 13

Monday, September 10

MAY 26, 2012 – CHIK-WAUK OPENS FOR 2012
GUNFLINT TRAIL HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING – JUNE 11
FISH FRY – JUNE 18
PIE AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL – AUGUST 11

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here we go into 2012...season number three for the magical place at the end of the Trail!

Set some time aside this season to investigate the many wonderful resources both inside and outside the granite walls at Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center.

The GTHS is working on several additional facility enhancements on Chik-Wauk's grounds, including a restored resort cabin, a marine display facility, an administrative outbuilding, and an open air pavilion/shelter. There are many requirements set by our partners at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Minnesota Historical Society's Historic Preservation office (SHPO). These requirements must be met to proceed with facility enhancements. Our partners have encouraged a process of documentation known as a Cultural Landscape Review (CLR).

So what is a CLR?

Expressed in simplified terms, a CLR is a professionally prepared "historical and present-day" analysis of the Chik Wauk property that includes guidelines for future enhancement plans.

The GTHS began the CLR process last summer. We received two proposals. Late fall was not an appropriate time to

begin the work and cost quotations were far greater than we had anticipated. In the October Trustee meeting, the Board rejected the proposals and sent me back to the drawing board.

Subsequently, Vice President Bob Baker, Historian Sue Kerfoot, and I met again with representatives from the USFS and SHPO to discuss alternative plans. We reinforced the urgency for completing the CLR properly. A new plan of attack evolved.

The current plan is to approach the process in three phases, moving ahead with each phase as finances permit.

While this three-step approach takes more time, it enables us to be prudent with resources. We will apply for funding for the first phase of the CLR from the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Legacy Grant Fund. Grant awards for this cycle are announced in late summer.

By the time Gunflint Times hits the streets, we anticipate receiving a number of CLR proposals. The Board of Trustees hopes to select the best professional for this quest. With all elements coming together, phase I of the CLR process will be under way by early fall.

Frederick Smith, President

GTHS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The success of any organization begins with its leaders.

The GTHS has been blessed from the beginning with outstanding leaders. At the annual meeting of the GTHS this June, the terms of six of twelve Board of Trustee members expire: Bill Boissenin, Bonnie Schudy, Judy Edlund, Martha James, Michael Valentini and Suzanne Weber. In addition, our current museum chairperson, Sue Kerfoot, will step down.

GTHS by-laws mandate, with the exception of officers, Board of Trustees members may serve no more than two consecutive two-year terms.

A blend of diverse talents and backgrounds of Gunflint Trail residents have made the GTHS successful to date. I am happy to report the majority of Board of Trustees members with expiring terms have expressed a willingness to continue to serve on a wide variety of GTHS committees and that several individuals have expressed a willingness to be nominated to serve on the Board of Trustees beginning in June.

Bob Baker, Sr., Vice President

2012 SEASON EVENTS

We have learned several good things about members and friends of the Gunflint Trail Historical Society. We all enjoy good food and fellowship. We are enthralled with the history, the natural beauty, and the people of this Gunflint Trail area. We enthusiastically support the proposed projects. We consider all these good things as we plan our 2012 fund-raising events.

June 18 You are all invited to our annual Fish Fry on the grounds of Chik-

Wauk Museum and Nature Center at noon. Bruce Kerfoot and the crew from Gunflint Lodge will again prepare a delicious "shore lunch."

August 11 The much-anticipated Pie and Ice Cream Social will also be held on the porch and grounds of Chik-Wauk Museum. Who can forget those wild blueberry pies? We will serve from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

September 8 Plans are under way for a Hungry Jack Lake Historic Home Tour.

The tour will be held from 1 - 4 p.m., with refreshments served in one of the homes. There will be interesting stories of original owners with each historic cabin. Reservation details will be announced at GTHS meetings, in the news publications and online.

We look forward to seeing you and your family and friends at each event. All proceeds will be used for the continued expansion and improvement of Chik-Wauk Museum and Nature Center.

Judy Edlund, Events Chair

THE GUNFLINT TRAIL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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GUNFLINT TRAIL PROFILE: BENNY AMBROSE

In the early years of the Gunflint Trail, many single men lived in the area, including the Powell brothers, Art Madsen, Charlie Cook, Dave Clark and Billy Needham. One of the best known was Benny Ambrose.

Benny arrived here about 1919. He lived at Grand Portage and Hovland before coming up the Gunflint Trail. The lure for him was always prospecting. Eventually Benny bought a home site on Ottertrack Lake. He would live there for the rest of his life.

Like the other men, Benny was rough and tough. The frigid Northwoods weather was nothing to him. Summer or winter, he wore two thermal undershirts, a plaid wool shirt and black work pants held up by suspenders. It was all topped by a felt hat. For many years his home had a roof made of canvas. In the summer, Benny just moved the home outside. A canvas top kept everything dry.

Benny made his living by prospecting, trapping, guiding and odd jobs. He supplied live fisher to zoos. Any time he came across a fresh fisher track, Benny started chasing. It might take him three or four days, but eventually he would be able to capture the live animal. It was worth \$100 to a zoo.

You would be foolish to assume that Benny didn't know what was going on in the wider world just because he lived in such a remote area. A battery powered radio kept him in touch with current events.

His favorite radio personality was Paul Harvey. Friends said that he would listen to the radio well into the night. Visitors were amazed at all he knew. In fact, Benny often knew more than they did.

Benny was married for 14 years and had two daughters. The rough life in the woods and the need to educate the girls lead to his separation from his wife. The one compromise that Benny could not make for his marriage was to leave the woods. His girls always came back to visit him.

His wife left Benny with a love of flowers and gardening. As anyone who has traveled in the BWCAW knows, the soil is not very conducive to gardening. Benny solved this problem by hauling in black dirt on a regular basis. Everyone in the area looked forward to his gifts of fresh vegetables.

Benny also loved playing baseball. He played in Grand Marais on a regular basis. This involved leaving home at 3:00 a.m. to walk to town, arriving around 9:00 p.m. The next day, he played baseball and ran errands. On the third day, Benny got up at 3:00 a.m. to walk home.

Benny was in his eighties when his heart gave out at his Ottertrack home. He would have wanted it no other way.

Sue Kerfoot, Historian



Benny Ambrose



NATURE PROGRAM NEWS

The Gunflint Trail Association is the recipient of a \$43,000 National Scenic Byway grant designated to develop and market a nature program for the Gunflint Trail based at Chik-Wauk. Initial equipment purchases include multiple sets of child-sized binoculars, a weather station, and remote cameras. You'll be hearing more about this program as it develops.

Suzanne Weber, Trustee