

French River - Eighteen Mile Island



Participants: Bill, Janice, Joe and Pierre.
Total Distance: 78 Km., 550m. in 12 portages.

Aug. 15, 1998. Janice: Bill, Joe and Pierre left Bayfield at 12:30 pm. to pick me up in Clinton at my work. We finally left there at 1:00 pm. We are on holidays! French River here we come. We got to Cookstown and looked at the Hwy.# 400 and we decided to go back to Hwy.# 27 north. The 400 was wall to wall cars, stop and start. There is a concert at Barrie tonight and we figured that all the people must be going there. Got on the 400 after Barrie and sailed on up to Parry Sound where we had Harvey's for supper. We got to Grundy Lake around 7:30 pm. Nice park.

Aug. 16, 1998. After a good breakie and a nice shower we checked out the beach. At a campsite we saw a large puffed up baby bird of prey on the ground. We went to Loon's Landing and were at the office at 10:25 am.

Bill: Headed out around 11:00 am. Had lunch across from Gibraltar rock at 12:45 pm. Joe fell in the lake there when he was leaving and was soaked up to his waist. We fixed his ovy and looked for pictographs on the rock. Didn't see any old ones but there were a lot of names spray painted on. Too bad. We got to Ouellette rapids just at 3:30 pm. Did the portage and camped on the south side of the river. Nice spot. We could see the bridge with the swift water under it from our site. We watched people swim and float down the rapids. Looked like fun so we did it too, before supper. Had supper late at 6:45 pm. It was a good hungry man chicken soup with no bake lemon muck for dessert. It was a gorgeous day. The night is clear and you can hear the water running down the rapids. In bed by 9:45 pm.

Janice: Joe pointed out a beaver across the river. We watch him tear a branch from the tree and slip into the water with it. Neat.

Aug. 17, 1998. Up at 6:00 am. We were on the water at 9:00 am. Traveled up the swift under the bridge and past Wigwam Islands. We saw a family of mergansers and some cormorants and a couple of loons. There are only a few motor boaters today. We had passed a couple of canoes close to Caulkins Island and they followed us. We stopped for a gorp break midway to Ash Bay and they caught up to us and we followed them for a while. They stopped at a site and we stopped at the point before Ash Bay. We had lunch and pressed on. Thunder and black clouds worried us and we quickly did the portage (60 m.) before Cedar Rapids and prepared for a storm. We set the canoes up against an old tired tree and buckled down for a wild storm. Wouldn't you know it, the worst missed us. By now the other canoeists caught up to us. Well off we went in pouring rain. Very very wet. Joe said he was getting wet from the bottom up.

Bill: We made it to the island lift over, but it was difficult to do because the rocks were wet and slippery. We had to do more than a lift over because we had to unload the canoes. We paddled up to the next rapids and were able to lift over them. The last set of rapids we had to portage about 100 m. and the other canoers were just getting to the end as we were leaving. After Cedar Rapids we picked the site at

the end of the next group of sites. There are islands out from us and Pierre swam there and back. We put our wet clothes out on a rock to dry and it rained off and on all afternoon. We put our tents and fly up and the boys made supper. They made a good meal of stew and we had dried fruit and tea for dessert. We washed up and went to bed at 8:30 pm. because it was raining.

Aug. 18, 1998. Up at 6:00 am. Oatmeal for breakfast and on the water at 9:15. The wind was out of the north-east. It was strong and we had to paddle against it. It was easy to follow the map and we had a gorp break each hour. We saw a wolf looking at us from shore and when we all looked and pointed, it backed away into the bush. We were at the 25m portage at 11:15 am. and we made camp at noon on Eighteen Mile Island, just before the next rapids. It is a nice site with two good spots for the tents. We had lunch and set up camp. We fished and watched the birds and rapids and had a wonderful afternoon. There have been many terns all along the river. We enjoyed watching them here. Had Sloppy Joes with tortillas for supper with butterscotch pudding for dessert. Joe seems to be the lucky one this time since he has caught 5 bass so far. Pierre learned how to un snag his lure. Janice saw a big long fish jump out of the water twice at her lure and wonders why it would miss it like that. It got dark and we are in our tents at 9:15 pm. It is a clear night and everything is dried out from yesterday.

Janice: Aug. 19, 1998. We woke at 6:00 am and drifted back off to sleep till 7:00. Saw a Kingfisher fishing in front of the site. There is a gorgeous mist off the river and we are on the right side of the island. The mist is rising up into the other shore and we are nice and dry. Today we cooked bannock on a rock. Joe and Pierre didn't crawl out of the tent till 9:30. The bannock was good. We left camp at 11:30 am. to canoe around Commanda Island. It is 12:45 pm. and we have stopped for lunch half way down the island on the east side. Nice lunch site. We had been trolling and fishing and once again Joe has the most fish caught so far.

Bill: We saw a couple of Osprey soaring high in the sky. We didn't catch any more fish so we turned our attention to running the rapids. Had fun doing the eddy ins and outs. When we got back to our site, there was a whole bunch of people at the rapids. Some were portaging and the rest looked like kids getting a white water lesson. Joe and Pierre made macaroni and ham and cheese for supper and we did the dishes. The four of us piled into a canoe and went across the river to fish. I caught a large bass and Joe caught more fish. I think he is up to 11 now if you count the minnow he caught. Pierre found out what poison ivy looks like. We have neighbours to the west now who set up on the portage trail. We had a camp fire and went to bed at 10:00 pm.

Janice: Aug. 20, 1998. We got up at 6:30 am. Had pancakes, packed up and left at 9:30. We are now heading back towards Loons Landing on the Main Channel. We ran Double Rapids. The Ladder was all dried up so we canoed over to the Blue Chute. It was runnable but we decided to portage anyway. We portaged Little Parisien Rapids and had lunch here at 12:00. The wind is something else. We came to Devil's Chute and since the crew ahead of us were setting themselves up to run these, we decided to go around to Big Parisien Rapids. Well wouldn't you know it, there was no water flowing there. What low water levels. We did two good lift overs to get back into the Main Cannel again. What a strong head wind! Wild, tough going. Crooked Rapids is only a fast movement of water. Half of it is dried up. We are camped on the point by Crooked Rapids and we watch people come in and very excitedly check out the rapids. They sound disappointed and then carry on. We got here at 2:00 pm. It started to rain at 4:00. Good thing we had a tarp up. Just before we made supper, Joe slipped off a rock and into the river while fishing. These black rocks are slippery. He is hurt and we bandage him up. Poor guy. We made a no bake chocolate cake and then a good chicken and rice meal. Boy did it rain and rain and rain. It stopped in time for the boys to dry out the bottom of their tent. My sleeping bag is a little wet. Well to bed at 9:30. Hope tomorrow is dry.

Bill: Aug. 21, 1998. Up at 6:00 am., had oatmeal for breakfast and on the water at 8:45 am. Slippery

rocks. The sky was cloudy but the air was clear. We fished and trolled down the river. We had a break on Cross Island and picked blueberries and ate them. We got to Parisien Island around noon and picked a site beside it to camp on. (The others were taken.) Instead of eating lunch right off, we put our stuff out to dry and ate soup around 1:30 pm. We fished and swam for the rest of the afternoon in the nice hot sunny weather. The landscape is rocky and pines with lots of places to camp. Had spaghetti for supper and then I cleaned the two fish we kept for a snack. Janice cooked them in tinfoil on the fire and it turned out great with tarragon, rosemary and chives for spices. We stowed our stuff away and are in bed at 9:30 pm. We had great weather today.

Aug. 22, 1998. There is a Pileated Woodpecker calling in the woods behind us. Up at 5:45 am. Joe and Pierre up at 6:00 am. (That's good for them.) Had granola for breakfast and were on the water just after 8:00 am. The mist rose off the water and it was like paddling through a cloud. The water was calm and we made good time. Had a gorp break at 9:15 at the island down from where we started. After this the river got wider and the shore had more sand and gravel beaches. The trees look shorter with more birches. Had another break before Dalton's Point. We passed by the cottage with the tennis court going into Canoe Pass. It did not fit the surrounding. There are more elaborate camp sites where people just boat in and stay and the fisher people use them for a stop over while fishing. The site that was in the bay to the south of Canoe Pass was not accessible because of the low water. We found a beautiful spot in the bay to the north that is spacious and has a nice landing. There is a large snapping turtle out front. He is camera shy. We were here at 11:00 am. and we set up camp. Lunch was triscuts with summer sausage and fruit leather for dessert. Janice got a good picture of Pierre writing in his log and sawing it too.

Janice: Well it is too hot, way too hot. We spent the whole afternoon running around trying to find shade. The sun is great, but man it's hot. It is very busy and noisy here with boats and we can clearly hear the train. It is picturesque, but too fast and loud. Joe and Pierre made biscuits on a rock on the fire. Stew for supper. They pumped a ton of water for tomorrow and hung the bag for the night. They also did the dishes. 8:45 pm. and the mosquitoes are out.

Aug. 23, 1998. It is now 6:15 am. We woke at 5:45 when it started to rain. Those poor boys got everything ready so that we can quickly leave, but no one seems to want to get up in the rain. They are awake. Oh, oh. I guess we had better get up. They are putting the stove together. I think they are ready to go home and we would love to stay longer. We had breakfast and packed in the light rain. The rain stopped just in time for us to leave. We left the camp site at 9:00 am. We canoed through Canoe Pass. That was interesting. It had a neat appeal to it. We crossed Dry Pine Bay and ended at Loon's Landing at 9:40 am. Good trip.

Joe: Great trip!!!! Interesting to see all of the flat tent "puddles" that we could have laid our tent on after it rains. Had fun catching fish. I caught the most (14 I think, not to brag or anything) fish. I was disappointed when we kept Dad's little bass instead of 70% of the fish I caught that was bigger than it. Great landscape, but I didn't like all of the cottages and motor boats. They make it seem too busy. We are on the way back home now, back to civilization.

Pierre: " MMMM ... This tastes good! "

Bill: This was the surprised comment that Pierre made after the first bite of everything he tried. It is nice to take your time in doing this loop and truly enjoy the water and the scenery. My highlight was seeing the wolf on shore. Great trip.

THE END