

French River Fourteen Mile & Eighteen Mile Island



Participants: Janice and Bill.

Distance: 133Km. with 480m in 5 Portages, 1 Line and 1 Lifterover.

Sat. Sept. 21/02: *Bill:* We left Bayfield at 4:30pm. We were going to Schell's camp, but it was so late that we stopped and camped at Grundy Lake Provincial Park, 10:30pm.

Sun. Sept. 22/02: 23k. Instead of putting in at Schell's Camp we decided to go to the French River Supply Post. They charged us \$3.00 a night to park the van which was ok, but they also charged us \$3.00 to launch and \$3.00 to take out when we are done. We were on the water at 11:00am. I recollect that we were at Recollet Falls and took pictures. There was a boardwalk and it helped keep us out of the poison ivy. There were four falls spanning the river. We had a bag lunch on the water and then the wind picked up against us. We saw turkey vultures and seagulls along the way. At First Rapids we passed 3 canoes that were going up river. One of them was stuck on a rock and had to get out and push the canoe. We ran these and Little Flat Rapids. Little Flat Rapids has a winch there to pull boats upriver. We got to the train bridge at about 3:00pm and saw a train go over. Janice took a picture of the bridge because it had 3 different styles of construction. It started raining then. We passed a big canoe scout camp called Tinnerman, which was owned by a Cleveland Council. We rounded the end of Fourteen Mile Island into Pickerel Bay and saw a big black bear checking out the water just before Bear Island. We looked around for a camp site and we saw the bear again at the cottage just to the east of where it was. We didn't want the campsite that was close by because of the bear. We ended up at a point of land about a kilometer west of the train bridge on the south side. It has not stopped raining so we put up a tarp and the tent. Had supper and got everything put away just as it was getting too dark to see and got into the tent at 8:30. Haven't seen the bear here yet.

Mon. Sept. 23/02: 18k. *Janice:* We woke early, but rolled over and stayed in bed for a while longer. It was nice and cozy. Well, it promises to be a better day today. The sun peeks out at us every once in a while. The tent is easy to take down, just remove all the rocks from the pegs. We have a tube tent so we needed lots of rocks since we are set up on a big rock slab. We left camp at 10:30. It took us a while to dry out our stuff. We canoed east on the Pickerel River. A truck drove by on the railway bridge just as we were approaching it. There are numerous fishing boats busy traveling to this spot and that spot to fish. It must be hunting season, we see people in orange, hear shots, and notice boats parked along the shores. This route must be busy in the summer with all the cottagers. We headed south into Little Canoe Channel. It was very pretty there. We turned eastward and ate our lunch in the canoe as we drifted past Hahn Island. I surprised a garter snake on a shore visit. I put sunscreen on and then the sun went in and it became quite cool. We spent rest of the afternoon putting a rain coat on and then off. It rained and drizzled. We had a gorp break at a nice site at Twin Narrows. There is a new shiny green (snowmobile?) bridge just before hwy. 69. The road crew was working on the old bridge just to the east of it. We canoed under the railway bridge and over to Trestle Gully Lake. We paddled northward to the end of the lake and camped at the site on the north shore just before Little French Rapids. We arrived

here at 3:30. We've had a nice afternoon and the sun came out again. There is a train track about a kilometer to the west of us and he blows his whistle as he roars on by. These are very busy train routes. I am enjoying a nice fire and Bill is fishing. He has already caught and released one. Tomorrow we will portage the river bed to Deer Bay. Little French Rapids are dry.

Bill: It was a beautiful calm bay and we had a wonderful evening.

Tues. Sept. 24/02: 22k. We got up and it had rained through the night and it didn't want to quit. I went and put up the tarp and I even had hail coming down on me. We were on the water at 10:30 and did the short paddle to the river bed. The rocks were treacherous to walk on because they were wet and had slippery algae on them. We had to go up and around one pond on the way up to Deer Bay. The rain has stopped and we are paddling across Deer Bay at 11:15. We had lunch on a point in Dry Pine Bay just before Stony Rapids. We went to go up the rapids, but we thought it would be easier to do the portage by Meshaw Falls. The ducks and mergansers were real used to people in the bay and let us come right up to them. After we did the portage we read the private property sign as we were putting in. We probably should have gone right by the bridge. We had the wind in our back as we did Eighteen Mile Bay. We went over to Gibraltar Rock and thought about Joe on our last trip here. We lined up Ouellet Rapids and ferried across to the calm water just before it. There was a swift under the bridge and we went up that no problem. We canoed across the bay after Devils Door and looked at the first site. It was a seagull hangout. We picked the next site just down from there and found a nice flat spot for the tent. It is a nice site. We made camp and washed our hair and had a rice meal for supper. There are a few dark clouds still going by but we had a beautiful reddish sunset tonight. We had a nice campfire and went to bed.

Wed. Sept. 25/02: 28k. *Janice:* We woke to mist on the river, or should I say fog. We made ourselves ready and headed out at 9:30am. The sun is shining and it is a glorious day. The river is very calm and there is little wind. We spied a fox as we paddled along. He was just past Rainbow Camp. He peeked at us and we peeked at him until neither of us could see him anymore. We were making good time and enjoying the scenery. There are still many cottages. We lined up Cedar Rapids on the left and we had our lunch here at 12:00.

Bill: We came to the next set of rapids and had to take our packs out to do the lift over past the island. Instead of doing the whole 400m. portage we took our packs out and lifted the canoe to the next level and put the packs back in. We canoed up to the last 2 rapids and portaged around those. We paddled up river about 4km. and had a gorp break on the island. Janice sat down beside an interesting rock that turned out to be a snake house. When she saw the snake looking at her she stood up and then slowly walked away. It wasn't a rattle snake but the colour was similar and it had a row of white specks down it's side. We passed a couple of fishermen who were the first people we saw today and then we saw a couple deer that were eating shrubs along the river. We are camped on the island south of Rainy Island. We can hear Little Pine Rapids from here. We found an old chimney and a few rotting logs from a cabin at the very top of the hill. We had chili for supper and a short little fire. We went in early because there are mosquitoes here. It is a nice clear night and the stars are out.

Thurs. Sept. 26/02: 9k. We woke to a grey sky and weren't on the water 'til 10:45. We paddled 1km. to Little Pine Rapids, did the 50m. portage and then fished for a while. We didn't catch anything but snags so we carried on trolling along the way. We had lunch at Big Pine Rapids and saw another canoe couple heading up the river. We checked out the site where we had stayed before and figured the water was up in this section compared to when we did it before. We had lunch and portaged past the rapids and continued on trolling along the way. We canoed down Double Rapids by Point Edward and then did Blue Chute after checking it out. We checked out Little Parisien Rapids (topo map; Big Parisien on Ontario Parks & Friends of the French River map) and then ran them. Next came Devil's Chute and we did it remembering how horrible it was when we did Big Parisien Rapids on the north side and there was no rapids just big boulders we had to lift over. We saw a couple of blue herons up close along the way. We stopped for a gorp break at the next camp site. It was only 2 more km. to Crooked Rapids where we set up camp for the night at 3:30pm. The sky was sunny and we had a chance to get cleaned up. We made a fire to cook bannock on and since there was no grill we cooked it on sticks. It worked out real

well. It is a mild night and we are still up with a little campfire at 10:30pm. Janice can hear an owl hooting in the distance.

Fri. Sept. 27/02: 9k. *Janice:* Bill was dressing and eager to go fishing when I decided to move. It's not a bright day, overcast and the air is damp. I was packing my things in the tent when I heard the seagulls squawking and I thought "I wonder if Bill has caught a fish." Sure enough, a short time later he came to the tent asking me to bring the camera. He had caught a bass. We had fish, granola, and jerky for breakfast. Surf and turf. We left our site at 11:30. Crooked Rapids is a swift and there are 2 sites together on the north side immediately after them. The scenery is pretty, lots of sites along the way. We saw a few boats today. It is still motor boat and jet ski country. We stopped on the west side of Cross Island and ate our lunch. The white cross you see from that side is erected in memory of a priest who died in 1982. There are 2 more crosses up higher and slightly more to the south that we imagine are for the Jesuit priests the drowned in the rapids upstream. There is a campsite there as well. We checked out the site on the east side of Parisien Island and decided that it was too windy and cold, so we paddled around to the back side of the island and checked out the little cove site on the mainland, that we stayed at before. It has lots of memories, a great summer site. Bill thought the next site to the west might have what we were looking for, so we jumped back into the canoe and paddled to it, 2:30. This is where we call home, a big rock frontage, with lots of flat tent sites in the bush and a thunderbox. What more could you ask for. It is a sad thing though, this site is the dirtiest site for toilet paper and that stuff and it is the only site we've had with a thunderbox so far. There are many little bugs that are shaped like tiny flying white light bulbs. They are funny looking little things, their bodies look too big for their wings. I'll have to look them up when I get home. We made a great supper, potatoes, gravy, and green beans, with raisin tea biscuits for dessert. It's 7:45 and it has been dark for a while now and it is drizzling. We have a great fire, but we may have to head in.

Sat. Sept. 28/02: 24k. We did head in early last night because of the drizzle. We have such a nice tent spot, flat and sheltered. As always I was a little slower packing and Bill was out first. It wasn't long and he came back to let me know that an animal had knocked the rock off one of our pot lids and rolled the pot a few feet from where it was. The poor creature must have been disappointed only to find water. We usually pump our water ready for the morning and today we need to pump a little extra, all that was left was a few small footprints. The day is cloudy, but bright. We left the site at 10:30 after a great apple and orange dumpling breakfast. There are a lot of boaters whizzing by, most are heading east and they all seem to be loaded. We saw some boaters pushing and pulling their gear in a wheelbarrow up a mountainous hill just before Haystack Islands. We are guessing they were headed for the lake behind that little bay. Who knows, maybe they were only camping for the weekend, anyway, it looked like too much work. The sun came out and the breeze was cold, but what a wonderful day. We had lunch at a humungous site on the south side, 2nd site before the hydro lines. We decided to canoe through Canoe Pass and we checked out several marked sites and unmarked sites, some had thunderboxes. We had a gorp break at the site we had stayed at with Joe and Pierre. We paddled through Canoe Channel and looked at the site to the north on the mainland in Dry Pine Bay. It was very rustic and we decided since we were so close we would head out to the French River Supply Post and load up and head to Grundy Lake Prov. Park for a hot shower. We were at the Post about 4pm. They gave us a rebate for the day we didn't need and we headed off for that hot shower. It has been a great trip and we can now say we have canoed the French end to end in loops.