

A MAN. A PLAN. A CANAL. A BEACH. A PANORAMA ! (Long Form), 042423.)
– A SAUNTERER’S VIEW OF CRYSTAL LAKE (BENZIE CO), MI

“Crystal Lake will always be something special for me, because it symbolizes an emotion that goes beyond time and space.” ... “It (Michigan) is wood and water, golden sand and blue lakes, emptiness and memories and the sort of isolation which it is hard for a city man to come by, these days.” ... “This is good country to come from and it is even better to go back to. It is a land of memories and also a land of escape; a place where you can be utterly idle in more pleasant ways than any other place I know.” – Bruce Catton, *The Real Michigan*, *Holiday Magazine* 22(2), 26-39 (Aug. 1957).

Why tell the story about a singular esoteric ubiquitous event: the “Tragedy” / “Comedy” of Crystal Lake? Consider two twin antonyms: “uBiquity” and “uNiquity”, pronounced phonetically as: *you-bik-kwah-tee* and *you-nee-kwah-tee*. A cloud of mosquitos in the woods is *ubiquitous* (commonly everywhere at once); the one-of-a-kind that doesn’t seem to bite you at first is *uniquitous* (uncommonly rare)! All northern Michigan lakes share commonalities: geological histories, physiological features, hydrological behaviors; climatic influences, visual beauties, and recreational pursuits. Our visions are of clear waters and bright sunshine glittering from gentle waves lapping against pristine beaches ringed by wooded hillsides, scented of pine, exuding a spirit of place. We escape the congestion and “hustle-bustle” pace of our cities by vacationing at our special lake to experience carefree living, roughing it, returning to the simple life, and communing with nature. “The lake vacation bug bites all!”

Peculiar to Michigan were needs to improve the land-locked entrances of drowned river mouths along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan (i.e., the West Coast of MI) by creating “harbors of refuge” for shipping, and inland waterways to access the interior of the State. Other “improvement projects” included: canals, dams, locks, docks, and other appurtenances, for transporting timber, powering saw and grist mills, and irrigating newly cleared fields. Many natural river outlets were straightened and new channels dredged to navigable depths to connect nearby inland lakes by “slack-water” canals to Lake Michigan. These included: Saugatuck, Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, White Lake, Pentwater, Ludington, Manistee, Portage, Frankfort, Charlevoix, and Petoskey. The attempt to connect a canal from Frankfort Harbor to Crystal Lake proved to be the most ambitious of all *sui generis*.

In 1873, the level of Crystal Lake was dramatically lowered in an attempt to construct a slack-water canal between it and Lake Michigan. Most other canals had differences in level of only a few feet, the original level of Crystal Lake was 35 feet above Lake Michigan, which made it especially attractive for a canal. Unfortunately, the whitecap waves of Crystal Lake washed away a temporary dam before the canal could be completed. The level of the Lake dropped precipitously by 17 feet as 56 billion gallons of water poured down its outlet. Although a canal system was never realized, some 2,000 Acres of former lake surface was transformed into a 21-mile perimeter of sandy beach. This made possible: the founding of the Village of Beulah; the development of Frankfort and Benzie Co.; the coming of the railroad and carferries; installation of telegraph and telephone lines; development of lakeside resorts; and construction of 1,100 cottages, all connected by an infrastructure of perimeter roads and trails.

This epochal event was the largest inundation from an inland lake due to an anthropogenic cause (a dam breaching) in U.S. history for 147 years until surpassed by a larger event in 2020! One lake’s unicity is an object lesson to extrapolate to other lakes. Unicity of opportunity brought Archibald Jones. A “bootstrap engineer” to Crystal Lake. The Benzie County River Improvement Co. improved upon Nature, and increased the unicity for Crystal Lake. A unique place exists for Crystal Lake and its Watershed! It is a fascinating true story of a man, a plan, a canal, a beach, and a panorama! (539)

(*) Dr. Stacy Leroy Daniels. Benzonia Academy Lecture, Mills Community House, 7 PM, 13 July 2023.

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- A SAUNTERER'S VIEW OF CRYSTAL LAKE (BENZIE CO), MI

Why tell the story about a singular esoteric epochal unquitous event: the *"Tragedy"* / *"Comedy"* of Crystal Lake? All northern Michigan lakes share commonalities: geological histories, physiological features, hydrological behaviors; climatic influences, visual beauties, and recreational pursuits. Peculiar to Michigan were needs to improve the navigation of shallow rivers along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan by creating "harbors of refuge" and inland waterways to access the interior of the State.

In 1873, the level of Crystal Lake was dramatically lowered in attempting to construct a canal between it and Lake Michigan. The whitecap waves of Crystal Lake washed away a temporary dam and its level dropped precipitously by 17 feet as 56 billion gallons of water poured down its outlet. Some 2,000 A of lake became 21 miles of sandy beach. This led to a panorama: the development of Beulah, Frankfort and Benzie Co., and to telegraph and telephone, railroads and carferries, and resorts and cottages.

This unquitous event was the largest inundation from an inland lake due to an anthropogenic cause (a dam breaching) in U.S. history for 147 years until surpassed by a larger event in 2020! Archibald Jones, a "bootstrap engineer", and his Benzie County River Improvement Co., increased the unquity of Crystal Lake. It is a fascinating true story of a man, a plan, a canal, a beach, and a panorama! (2267)

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