

Mackinac Island Riders Take Good Care of Their Trails

"Spring burst upon the Island with sudden glory; the maples showed all at once a thousand perfect little leaflets, the rings of juniper brightened, the wild larches beckoned. The ice was gone."

— Constance Fenimore Woolson, "Anne"

Approximately 110 years after Constance Fenimore Woolson penned these lines about Mackinac in her novel, "Anne," West Bluff cottager Hope Goodwin approached the Mackinac Island State Park Commission with an idea. Mrs. Goodwin (much like the Victorian title character) grew up on Mackinac and was deeply in love with it. She was a wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a rider. She was also a third-generation descendant of one of the oldest continuous summer cottage families, the Blodgetts.

When her husband, MacDonald Goodwin, preceded her in death in the early 1980s, and her children had grown, Mrs. Goodwin sold the family estate in Maryland. She and her brother-in-law, Norton, moved (along with the household of cats, dogs, and horses) south, spending their winter months in central Florida. It was during these lengthy interstate drives down, and then seasonally northward, that Hope observed the "Adopt-A-Highway" signs along the routes.

Mrs. Goodwin's idea was born. Yet, she was an exceedingly shy woman. The following spring she approached Mackinac Island State Park Commission Director Carl Nold, with yours truly in tow,

Police Reports

Reports from the Mackinac Island Police Department from May 15 to May 19:

A man was found passed out on Cadotte Avenue near Mahoney Avenue around 1:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 16. Police on the scene called the taxi service to take the man back to his home.

Police are investigating an intimidation and stalking complaint filed by a woman Wednesday, May 17, against her ex-boyfriend, a 28-year-old St. Ignace man. She told police that he has left threatening messages on her cellular telephone voice mail for the past two-weeks.

Two men were cited for disorderly conduct after they were caught urinating in public in the city park early Thursday morning, May 18.



Leanne Brodeur and Navajo on Blodgett Trail, one of the Island's jumping trails. (Photograph courtesy of Trish Martin)

for moral support. She told him that her idea was for the horseback riders of Mackinac Island to each adopt a trail and be responsible for it. It would be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Mr. Nold generally liked the idea and handed the implementation of it over to Phil Porter, at that time a curator with savvy trail experience. Mr. Porter would be the agent to whom the adopters would report.

In her concept of Adopt-A-Trail on Mackinac, Mrs. Goodwin believed that riders were the more trail-knowing citizens of the Island. The

majority of that population then rode the trails daily. They would be in tune to note a fallen tree, abandoned bicycle, or litter. In order to get the maximum benefit of this, it was proposed that the adopters would begin their trail watch in the spring.

For seasonal riders in those days, Memorial Day weekend was spent "horseless." Time was parceled to cottage openings, visits to the cemeteries, the hope of an invitation to the first social party of the season, and a good walk in the woods. It was a perfect opportunity to forego looking for mouse droppings in closets. Eagerly

we would pick up a plastic bag and head for the woods, even if it was misty and cold out. Most riders then were also great walkers.

Armed with the plastic bag for garbage and a notebook to write down bigger problems, the trail blazers would be on the lookout for debris. If there were cans, wrappers, and bottles on the trail, they would be picked up. Missing jumps, broken signs, washouts, and bad overhanging limbs would be reported back to the Park. The Park in turn would relay this to their crews and they would attend to the matter.

What rider got what trail? There was never anything overly specific. I remember Mrs. Goodwin talking about this with other families, and each more or less agreed to do what appealed to them. The Adopt-A-Trail was not limited to just summer cottagers who rode, as riders from the Island and the Island's stables also joined in.

Some individuals signed up for extra trails, just because they liked doing it. Whole families have been involved. When our children were toddlers, they walked alongside us, just hoping for trash they could put into the bag. They asked us to see if we couldn't

adopt one more trail, just for them to clear. Today, even as teenagers, they still strike for the woods and are off to their spots, bags in hand.

Once the Memorial Day report was in, the adopters made a final check in the late summer or fall and sent a report back to the Park. The program is still an important one. If individuals are interested, they should contact the Park, and be committed. Please remember that there are three designated jumping trails on the Island for horses. These include Swamp, Straits, and the Blodgett's (including Oneonta). The jumps that are on them have been set for horse and rider, with easy go-arounds for foot or bicycle.

The late Mrs. Goodwin, the fictional Anne, and these woods still hold a powerful and personal place within my heart. I look forward each year to my horseless weekend, to walk the trails with my own family and to say hello to all my friends within.

Candice Dunnigan is an active member of the American Equestrian Association, the Waterloo Hunt, and the Mackinac Island Horsemen's Association. Seasonally she resides at Easterly Cottage.

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