

In 1909, northern Michigan (now called the Upper Peninsula) was mostly wild country and rivers. Within today's Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park are old-growth forests and wild rivers cascading down to Lake Superior. On the eastern edge of the park lies the Presque Isle River, bordered by hiking trails and visited by both hikers and tourists entering the park by car. Many years ago when I first came upon the Presque Isle, I found it beautiful but intimidating, even from the safety of a well-traveled footpath.

A second trip to the Presque Isle, with Howard Greene's journal in hand, began as innocently as his trip, stopping at the former railway crossing in Marisco and seeing scenes very similar to the town he saw more than a hundred years ago. A side trip to Yondota Falls outside town jogged my memory of seeing the waterfalls on the lower part of the river, leaving me to wonder how it might have been for Dad and the Gang to see Yondota as one of the only impediments to paddling the river, and then to be thrown into the continuous strong currents, rapids, and waterfalls that characterize the Presque Isle's steep descent to Lake Superior—and to have no way out but to continue on.

Adding to the peril of this 1909 trip was a torrential rainstorm in the area on July 25, 1909. The *Glidden Enterprise* of July 28, 1909, reported a "fierce rainstorm, a continual pour of rain for twenty-four hours. Which raised Bad and White Rivers to overflowing their banks, washing away bridges, culverts and dams. . . . At Morse the water is over the tracks to the depth of eighteen inches at the depot. . . . Ashland is

cut off from the outside world, it cannot be reached by rail from any direction and the losses there alone amount to a half a million." A note from the Ashland Experimental Farm reported total July precipitation at 9.31 inches, with 4.9 inches of that total coming in one twenty-four-hour period.

In the journal Dad refers to reports of heavy rains but may not have had access to enough information before they left Milwaukee on July 30 to gauge the full impact. Even when they learned that the area had experienced heavy rains, they couldn't know how that would affect the river they planned to paddle.

With Dad's trip journal in mind, I returned to the steep banks of the Presque Isle River. Watching the current hastily snatch chunks of driftwood and immediately carry them out of sight, I was far more impressed than on my first visit so many years earlier. How did the Gang survive?

The Gang survived, in good health, with no major or permanent injury. The Presque Isle became the bar by which all other trips and experiences were measured. They were never as hard and were often pale in comparison.

This journal includes fewer photographs than some of the other journals. The Gang's focus on the task of canoeing eclipsed taking pictures. Also, the photography outfit got soaked in the rapids—some images were lost.

Not all was lost, however. Dad's notes and enough images of the trip survived to give a reader a very rare opportunity to canoe the Presque Isle River.

[M.G.P.]

By Martha Greene Phillips.