

Pass the Paddle Recap

In this time of giving, we want to reflect on the memories made and the spirit of generosity of our Laketrails community at our Fall Pass the Paddle fundraising event. We successfully raised \$18,000 for some of our upcoming needs at camp. Thank you to everyone who attended and showed your support for the Laketrails community that we all love! Many young and more seasoned Laketrailers gathered this past October to enjoy some great chili, test out some awesome canoes, and hear stories about past adventures on trail.

We're continuing to fundraise this season to reach a fall goal of \$60,000 to replace the roof on the Main Lodge, fund camperships, and replace an outboard motor for one of the smaller boats. Please consider a donation to Laketrails as you approach the end of 2025 to help us meet this goal. We have already raised roughly \$40,000 of our goal!



Online Ducks Nest - Open Now!

You can now purchase merchandise when you are on 'far away islands' of your own! Orders will ship weekly. We will be selling these items through the spring until they are gone, and will restock in the fall of 2026. If you have suggestions for items you would like to see, please use the 'contact' page on the website and reference the online store. As this is a new addition and run by Laketrails volunteers, please be patient as we work out the kinks. Thank you for your support!

<https://laketrails.org/shop/>



2026 Summer dates

Session 1 (Full)	June 14-22
Session 2	June 24-July 2
Session 3	July 5-13
Session 4 (Limited Space)	July 14-22
Session 5 (Middle School)	July 23- 31
Session 6	Aug 3-11



History of the First Mess Hall

The Mess Hall at Laketrails has long been the heart of camp life, serving as a place for meals, planning, and camaraderie. The original core of the building was built around 1890 by Booth Fisheries and was used as an eating area. Once Laketrails took over the island, the building quickly became the central hub for campers and staff. It started with just a wood-burning cooking stove piped out the window:



One of the first uses for the Mess Hall was recording promotional tapes for radio broadcasts. By 1953 the iconic "LAKETRAILS" had been painted in white on the roof.



Before the chapel was constructed, religious services were held here underscoring its role as a multipurpose gathering spot.

Over time, the building evolved to meet growing needs:

- In 1953 and 1954 an "L" shaped screen porch was built with canvas cut from old tents as rain flaps
- In 1961 the office was turned into a canteen - soon to be the 'Duck Nest'
- In 1967 a concrete floor was added for the existing eating area and a new addition
- The new addition was done by 1968 which included an expansion to the eating area and a new camp office. They were built with a mix of donated supplies as well as camp funds
- By 1971 another addition was added to the east wall of the kitchen
- During the 70s the roof was re-shingled and the concrete floors were redone per the 1973 master plan for Laketrails
 - Note: this may have been the last time we have had to re-shingle a roof at camp...
- During this time the Mess Hall was redecorated and painted by the staff, Jack Wollack, and Jack Corwey
- In 1982 a new south annex replaced the porch and in 1983 a skylight was added to the kitchen roof when it was replaced
- The last big upgrade to the Mess Hall was in 1992, which included modernizing the kitchen and eating space

In the 90s, current Board member, Scout, was part of a team of camper workers that dug up the sewer system. Rumor has it that he permanently damaged his nose due to the bad odors that were experienced that day.

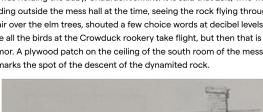


Several people are listed as helping with these renovations with the most common names being: Paul Haiman, George Normand, F. Louis Proulx, Sister Estelle, Felix Paine, John Kuznia, Bill & Jeff Conway, Mark Harren, Bill McGarry, Mike LaCoursiere and Earl Jenkins.

From its humble beginnings, the Mess Hall reflected the spirit of adaptability and community that defined Laketrails. Renovations over the decades transformed the old mess hall into a modern, functional space. This Mess Hall was replaced by the current "Great Lodge" that was built in 1996/1997.

Bonus story - taken straight from the Laketrails History book (pg. 228):

In August of 1967, one of the bizarre stories of the island took place. Dennis Veaser had some experience using dynamite, so after failing to blow a good hole for the mess hall grease trap they didn't fall to break some of the windows in the chapel, however, they (Earl Jenkins, Dennis Veaser and Bob Scarpino) proceeded to blow a few rocks from the path from the mess hall to the golden gate. A scream from the back room was heard shortly after one explosion as a rock about two feet long descended through the roof of the south room of the mess hall - not too far from Coke (Colleen Mersch) who was holding the baby, Chadrock Jenkins. It is said that Los, who was standing outside the mess hall at the time, seeing the rock flying through the air over the elm trees, shouted a few choice words at decibel levels that made all the birds at the Crowduck rookery take flight, but then that is only a rumor. A plywood patch on the ceiling of the south room of the mess hall still marks the spot of the descent of the dynamited rock.



The patch covering the entry hole of the dynamited rock

Next time in the Portage Runner: A history of the "Great Lodge"

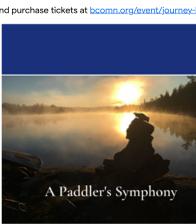
Laketrailer Spotlight

We're excited to highlight an upcoming performance featuring the work of Laketrails Guide (2013,2014,2016), and Program Director (2023), Sarah Kremer, whose original symphony, A Paddler's Symphony, will receive its world premiere with the Buffalo Community Orchestra on March 1st at 4:00 pm at the Buffalo High School Performing Arts Center!

The concert, titled Journey Home, is conducted by David Carrillo and also includes Edward Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite. A Paddler's Symphony is inspired by Sarah's deep connection to nature, water, and the outdoors. It reflects her lifelong musical journey and experiences in wilderness canoe expeditions and performances.

Tickets are \$12-\$16, and the concert includes a conductor chat at 3:00 pm prior to the performance. This is a special opportunity to support a member's original work and hear a brand-new symphony brought to life.

Learn more and purchase tickets at boom.org/event/journey-home



Meet The Board

Nick Collette

Tell us about your first summer at Laketrails:

I first came to Laketrails with the Eagan SSI group. My brother Sam (fellow board member) had introduced me to Laketrails by attending SSI a few years before me. My first year at Laketrails was in 2009. I then returned in 2010 with SSI as a Teacher's Assistant and again in 2012 as a guide. Laketrails has always held a special place in my heart, not only for its beauty, but the connection with my older brother Sam, too. It continues to be one of my favorite places on earth and where I have met some of my best friends as well.

What is your favorite destination in LOTW?

Our former Camp Director, Sue, will cringe when I say this, but my all-time favorite destination is Mason and Reid. I've since made my "name" in the staff training handbook because of this destination (ask me later - moral of the story, always remember to stay hydrated!). Honestly, I don't know what originally attracted me to that destination. Maybe the stories of previous guides struggling to get there, or hearing stories of the non-stop walleye fishing. Once I was successful in reaching the destination (go figure, via a snowmobile trail), I had to go back. Many Laketrailers have that one destination that, if they could be there right now without hesitation, they would, and that is Mason and Reid for me.

What is one of your favorite memories from being on the Island?

My all-time favorite moments on the island are the sunsets from the lodge deck. Being a part of the R&R group, I am fortunate that I get to experience more of these and still spend time on the island in a different capacity. It has been an amazing experience transitioning through the roles of camper, guide, and now, board member, as well as assisting with the overall maintenance and upkeep of the island so everyone can continue to experience the sunsets we all know. I hope to one day let my daughters experience this as well!

Aside from that, one memory that I will always cherish is my pilot training from Larry. Of which, many of us were fortunate to experience. I will always remember True Lake of the Woods' days when there were white caps and 20-30 mile per hour wind gusts. Larry came and found me in his yellow rain jacket and matching hat and said, "Let's go, I'm not driving, you are." Now driving my own boat and our family's boat, I still remember many of his tips and tricks. Thank you, Larry!

What keeps you coming back to Laketrails?

Laketrails is truly a place of beauty where you can just be yourself. Not only because of the people involved, but the solitude of the island allows you to clear your mind and the beauty of the lake and surrounding area keeps you wanting to come back for more. I have experienced some of the best memories of my life at Laketrails, and have also escaped to Laketrails during some of the worst times of my life. The island is a place where you can go and just be your own person. Everyone appreciates you for who you are as a part of the Laketrails family.



Corporate Board Meeting Reminder

Corporate members are invited to our annual corporate meeting on Saturday, March 21st (location TBD). If you are interested in becoming a corporate member, please reach out to the Board Chair, Janae Streufert (jkantrod@gmail.com).