

# 2013 Work Trip

OK, we're back. Mom kept everybody pretty much informed during the work trip to Canada but here is my final synopsis for your consideration.

This Spring the Muskoka area experienced what is being called the 100 year flood, an event that happens once every 100 years. Water levels were extremely high on all of the lakes and Skeleton was no exception.

Sandy and Nancy (Troy Cove) both reported that water was about 8 inches above the floor in their boathouse store and that all of the docks were underwater. I am sure all of our docks were underwater too along with the boathouse floor. I would guess that the water level on Lee Island was high enough to go under the storage building but not inside. Branches, brush, logs and dock parts were scattered along the shore line everywhere. The dock on Birch Lee suffered no damage and the boathouse is no worse for the wear although many items were disposed of due to mold and/or mildew. The Dock on Lee Island did not fare as well. The cribs, which weren't in particularly great shape anyway after 35 years of service, really took a beating and are now compromised. The main issue is the threaded steel rods that hold the crib(s) together. Most are considerably corroded or broken. I was able to straighten the dock and make it fairly stable but I'm exploring a more permanent fix for the future.

As mom mentioned earlier in one of her updates, an animal appears to have made a nest under the floor of the guest cottage and was able to gain access to the inside accommodations. Subsequently, the carpet and Styrofoam insulation was removed and thrown away. The floor will need to be replaced (an earmarked project prior to this situation) to prevent coming infestations and shore-up the existing structure. If someone wants to remove the existing floor, I will install a new one in August. This would also be a good time to install additional electrical service and do other cosmetic upgrades.

The Big House also saw a major infestation of what I believe to be a squirrel family. All the "damage" seemed to be contained to the front bedroom where the bunk beds are located. Many items were disposed of but due to time constraints we were unable to do a full assessment and it is likely that the bedding and other objects may also need to be thrown away. Anne said she would check out the situation better when she arrives. If any items on either island need to be taken to the dump, leave this stuff near the dock and I will transport them to Randy's trailer in August when I return.

All the pumps are installed and working. A used pump was purchased from Randy to replace the Little House pump that quit working last year. A new foot valve was also purchased for the Little House pump and the old foot valve was rebuilt. The holding tank on the Little House pump appeared to be leaking air where the motor attaches to the tank. This is a poor design and should be changed. I believe a better solution is to bolt the pump and motor to the wood frame and mount nothing to the tank. In fact, most new pump installations are performed this way. The Little House pump is an easy one to experiment with so, time permitting, I will fiddle with it

in August if there are no objections. The tank can be easily fixed and was not “hissing” when we left.

The Big House pump needed to have a new inlet pipe installed (quick disconnect was corroded and broken) and the wooden structure needed to be completely rebuilt due to rot. A new “hut” will be fabricated to cover the pump when I return in August.

Our main goal of replacing the steps on the Little House was finally completed just prior to leaving. The design was somewhat ambitious but necessary to safely enter the cottage for both young and older folks. The steps were built to stringent building codes and should last longer than the main structure they are attached to. Some trim work will be necessary to the siding where the old railing was nailed to the house. I will complete the detail work in August when I return.

The windows on the Little House porch were re-glazed and all of the cracked glass was replaced. The windows were either purposely or unintentionally installed backwards. The glaze is ideally on the outside of the window and takes the weather. Our glaze faces the inside. Turning the windows around should be easy enough to do and since additional repairs are going to be needed on one of the windows I might go ahead and fix this situation.

I am going to take a moment here to vent. Last year a window on the porch was broken and replaced. The repair was dreadful. I understand that not everybody has the skills necessary to properly do the variety of repairs that constantly need to be done on the islands but if this is the case, leave it for someone who is capable or pay someone to repair it. Good enough is not good enough and will cause additional problems down the road. Take the time and do it right and with pride! OK, let's move on.

Cyndi was able to apply a coat of Thompsons water seal to the new dock on Birch Lee and I finished some detail work on the beams. A couple more dock rings need to be installed on the decking. If anyone wants to attempt this easy job please use the same spacing and offsets already in place. The end of the dock would benefit from an aluminum pole support brace which should be easy to make with existing components. Call me for details if someone wants a project or I will do it next year.

The 9hp is working well and was left in the boathouse attached to the row boat. A full tank of gas is included.

Propane was replaced on one or two of the cottages and there should be plenty of full tanks if more is needed.

The tool room on Birch Lee was purged of all unnecessary (according to me) objects. What a joy to be able to completely open the door and see the items one may need to use. More can be done (do we really need Bops CG&E hard hat?).

The porch on Birch Lee was also purged of many items due to moisture from a slightly open window. The small refrigerator I rescued from the dump was relocated to the Big House.

Additional lamps were installed on the porch and the girls made a neat headboard out of an old box spring mattress. It almost looks respectable out there now.

I was going to have Bill look at the support structure under the porch but forgot. He was under the opinion that there was structural damage to the joists and I would bet that carpenter ants are to blame. A professional exterminator might not be a bad investment.

A new thermometer was purchased and installed outside the BL cottage near the hummingbird feeder. The old one was trashed.

Both pink tubs next to the BL fireplace contained a lot of water. If these leaks aren't identified and fixed soon, major structural damage will occur if it hasn't already. Mold has most likely already set in.

The roofs on Birch Lee main cottage and the Little House are approaching or have surpassed the 20 year warrantee of the shingle and will need to be replaced in the next five years or so. The Little House is especially bad and may be partly due to jacking up the extension for alignment purposes. Something we need to keep an eye on.

I was not able to pour concrete support pads for the Little House porch but this will be a priority item in August along with a support beam. The steel beam located under the bedroom addition was not relocated so watch your head if you go below the house. My apologies Amy!

The three big beams I rescued from the public dock that are now located on BL need to be move under the Little House or somewhere else on Lee Island. This is going to be a big job which will require significant manpower. I didn't get to it. Volunteers?

The water should be getting really nice this week. When we left the water temperature was around 67 degrees. There is a thermometer at the end of the Lee Island dock attached to a piece of fishing line if anyone is interested in monitoring the conditions.

It was rather disappointing to leave the work trip with only one major project completed. At this rate my 15 year island project plan will never come to fruition. Questions or concerns? Feel free to call me.

If anyone is interested in a Fall work trip let me know. It is a great time to be at the lake.

Hope everybody has a great vacation!

Jeff