

The Maiden Voyage or Voyage of the Maidens?

Friday, June 25, 2004 – (LCC 1) Shelburne Beach north around Shelburne Point and south to the Shelburne Bay Fishing Access

Distance: 14.5 miles

Weather: Overcast and cool, light winds

(CF) Our first trip of the summer, and of course it all took longer to set up than it should have. We were rusty and now that we have covered the parts of the lake closest to where we live we have to travel further to get started. For starters, Margy was waiting at our starting point, Shelburne Beach, at the appointed time and I at our ending point, the Shelburne Bay newly renovated Fish and Wildlife boating access. Now it might seem that I was obviously confused about our meeting place. Why would we start at the finish? But we needed to leave my van with the capacity to carry to 2 kayaks at the finish for the end of the day. Margy was going to meet me, we would put my kayak on her car and off we would go to Shelburne Beach. Fortunately we both have cell phones and had exchanged numbers earlier that morning. But while I was on the high ground for having the right meeting place and my phone turned on (not always the case and something my kids give me grief about all the time) , I had failed to bring Margy's cell phone number with me! That was sitting at home on the kitchen counter! Right now the reader might legitimately start wondering about our competency in undertaking this kayaking adventure. Even if we can eventually get ourselves to points A and B by land, leave the cars in the right place and make sure we have the keys with us, are we capable of getting from point A to point B in the water! In fact in the beginning of our adventures we did not even carry a map in our kayaks. We basically took a long look at our route before we pushed off and left the non waterproof map in the car! Fortunately there are not any turns one has to make when traveling along the shoreline so we rarely got lost but we did not always know where we were or how far we had come or more importantly, how much further we had to go. As the convoluted shoreline twists and turns frequently we did not even know what direction we were headed in. We did not carry a compass either, but then again we were never out of sight of the shore. A waterproof map was added to my compliment of gear in the beginning of 2003 season, and to Margy's this year. We are still working on the compass idea.

So capable or not, ready or not, and with the help of Doug, Margy's husband, we finally got ourselves and cars all in the right places and pushed off the Shelburne Beach shore about noon.

(MH) We pushed off under gray hanging skies with a clearing weather forecast. There were some surprises. One was the absolute beauty of the shoreline and the other was the weather.

We paddled across Meach Cove admiring the sweep of fields to the water and the cleanliness and order of the Shelburne Town Beach on a cool, cloudy day. Rounding the edge of the bay, the cliffs rose improbably steeply. They were an intriguing patch work of rock layers which great forces had molded into so many angles!

This trip on the broad lake side was an alternating series of cliffs and graceful bays. The cliffs differed remarkably from each other in their visible composition. The most common layers were of gray stone varying widths from least than an inch to a couple of feet. At times the layers were horizontal, others perfectly vertical, and at others in wave patterns. At one point the rock changes to a brown massive. In the bay, one outcropping was composed of many small stones imbedded in a harder rock. Such suspense in rounding the end of each bay to find what this next cliff would be made of!

While the cliffs were beautiful, the signs of erosion were everywhere. We constantly saw cascades of brown dirt covering sections of layered rock. Sometimes the rock had given way to and heaps of stone lay at the foot of the cliff.

Leaving Meach Cove, we saw our first loon, a single bird who was busy enough diving to not be bothered by our passing and pausing to admire. As we paddled north along the shore, white throated kingfishers kept us company with their swooping flight from limb to limb and their nasal chirp. Cliff and tree swallows were actively catching bugs. Kingbirds were visible in almost every bay. We saw 3 more loons, all alone, one in the broad lake, one part way into Shelburne Bay and one closer to the access. Two snowy egrets stalked in the shallow reeds near the access.

Occasionally the cliffs were crowned with large houses, but mostly they were visible in the fields which sloped more gently to the water. Even with the large houses, the amount of undeveloped land so close to Burlington is startling. What a treat to paddle along a shore and be able to stretch the imagination a bit to 400 years ago before we had made such an imprint on the land. We were reminded that we had had the same reaction on the Georgia shore. Such open space is such a gift to us all, a combination of benevolent planning, aggressive conservation and preservation actions, and many generous people.

We admired the mist gathering under Giant, in the Adirondacks as we looked back across the lake and the layers of gray in the overhanging clouds. Our admiration lessened as the mist appeared to be rain and advanced toward us ending in a light shower. Most of it appeared to pass south of us for which we were grateful. So much for the clearing forecast! But the wind remained light turning from north to south as we rounded the end of Shelburne Point.

Shelburne Point is such a treasure! The shoreline is a series of lower cliffs, jumbled rocks, small coves, the sweet smell of cedar seeping down and over the water as we glided along under the trees. It's fate depends on our future decisions as a community. On this peaceful gray day, we could only hope that some way could be found to keep it in this more pristine state.

Given the weather and the temperature, most of the boats in Shelburne Bay were tied at the mooring and docks. In fact the lack of any boat activity in one of the largest anchorages on the lake was incredible, a rare aberration from the norm. The waterfronts in front of the many homes were quiet. We were intrigued by the variety of architecture which we will not comment further on.

The southwestern shore of the bay is again wild. We have both walked the trails many times. The height of the cliff is again improbable, but beautiful rising so steeply from the water. Only when we got to the Shelburne Town mooring area where people had pulled their dingys up on shore was there much sign of human impact. Passing that, the reeds in the shallow waters were disturbed only by the ghostly egrets, stretching their necks as they waded through the water.

We pulled out into the newly refurbished and enlarged boating access pleased with our first expedition. Next time we will have 2 double racks. (MH)

Birds sighted: Kingbirds, tree swallows, cliff swallows, 2 snowy egrets, 4 solitary loons, cormorants, osprey, gulls, kingfishers, blue jay, mergansers with ducklings