

The Tradition Continues: The 75th GLR Tour

By Judy Wright

Linda and Carl Sturgeon of the Brighton Chapter hosted the delightful 75th Great Lakes Region (GLR) Tour on May 19-23. Organizing and participating in the event was a multi-generational family affair! Carl and Linda's two sons, Carl II and Jeremy, with wives Cherie and Lisa, grandchildren Hannah (Jeremy and Lisa) and great-grandson three-year-old Arlo (Carl II and Cherie) joined in the fun.

We toured the northern third of Michigan's thumb in Huron County. Think of Michigan as a left-handed oven mitt. This area, once known for its timber industry, is now mostly farming with miles and miles of agriculture as far as the eye can see.

I am happy to report there were no major automobile problems during the tour, if you don't count Mike and Thelma Stitt's truck blowing an engine rod on the way to the tour. Thankfully they still came after borrowing a relative's truck.

Our home base for the tour was in Bad Axe, Michigan. On the tour's first driving day, we visited the Pioneer Village located in Bad Axe. The Gathering Place attached to the host hotel was where we had our opening and closing banquets. We enjoyed Detroit-style pizza on the first night. This dish is characterized by a thick, rectangular deep-dish, with a light, airy, and chewy crust that is incredibly crispy on the bottom and sides.



Four generations helped to organize this year's GLR Tour.



Michigan's thumb area with Bad Axe's location marked.



A slice of Detroit-style pizza.





GLR tourists pose for a photo on the General Store Museum's front porch. Left to right: Ron Kovaks, Cindy Dutton, Isabelle Kompanowski, Nancy Wilt, Amanda Kompanowski, Mike Stitt, Carl Sturgeon, Thelma Stitt, Mark Kosin, and Beverly Kosin. With a hammer in one hand and tongs in the other it looks like Doug Kennedy is channeling his inner blacksmith.

If you prefer small farm communities and quaint tourist coastline towns, the thumb is where you must go! We explored the coastline and the inland areas. Those on the tour reveled in fresh seafood from the Bay Port Fish Company and the Bay Port Inn.

One of the most unique places that we explored was the Thumb Octagon Barn. This remarkable structure is located outside Gagetown, Michigan. Local businessman James

Purdy, hired builders George and John Munro to construct the eight-sided barn in 1924. As a young man during the 1890s, a trip to Iowa inspired Purdy's appreciation for eight-sided barns. Over many decades, the Thumb Barn fell into a state of disrepair. In 1994, a committee was launched with the goal of restoring it. By 2002, the exterior of the barn had been rescued, and the entire restoration project was completed in 2020.



Left to right—GLR Tour cars parked in front of the Thumb Octagon Barn in Gagetown. Mark Kosin and his sister Mary Agnew pose for a photo.





Alvin Abbott stands with his 1950 Hudson Hornet. The beautiful Michigan "Thumb" shoreline.

Afterward we had a delicious lunch served at Gagetown Church. The pastor brought maple syrup for sale!

We visited many other places of interest, viewed several lighthouses, and toured numerous local museums. If you are ever in Port Hope you will want to have a Buck Burger at Buck's Port Hope Diner and tour the nearby Lumberyard Museum. Another stand out tour was in Harbor Beach at the Frank Murphy Museum. There we discovered that Frank Murphy (1890-1919) was once a Detroit mayor, Michigan governor, and a Supreme Court Justice appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt. We toured three private collections, one of which included an assortment of over 100 tractors. One gentleman from Port Hope encouraged local residents to put on a car show for us and included many of his own cars.

Everyone was so welcoming and happy to have us visit! We enjoyed having youngsters Hannah and Arlo join us along with Richard Staadt's dachshund Marty. Richard drove his 1911 Ford Model T, the oldest car on the tour. He had Isabelle and Karen Kompanowski along for the ride as his navigators.

Many times, I do not realize how lucky we all are to go on these tours until I get home and reminisce. Thank you so much Carl and Linda Sturgeon; you did a fabulous job!!



A line of up of antique tractors at one of the collections we visited.

(Photos by Judy Wright)