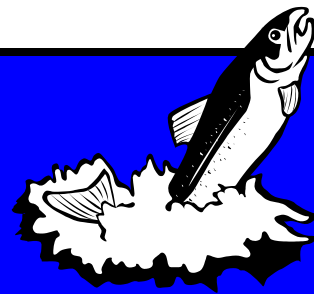


# Brule River

## Sportsmen's Club, Inc.



January 2026

OVER 500 MEMBERS DEDICATED TO THE IMPROVEMENT AND PRESERVATION OF THE BRULE

# The Brule's Pools

By Mike Sierszen

There I was, canoeing down the Brule with my gal, looking for a meeting place. Friends had left Stone's Bridge before us and Tom had called out, "Let's meet at Sally's."

"I don't think I've met Sally," says I. "Where's her place?"

"Sally's Pool is the one at Cedar Island with the dock on the little island. Sally was an Ordway!"

Hm. That upstream exchange, plus curiosity about lower-river spots, got me looking into how some of these Bois Brule places got their names. So I read books and old reports and talked to river rats who have haunted the stream longer than I have, to put this account together.

But first, a disclaimer: I gathered information as I could, but make no guarantees as to completeness or veracity. I've only included place names I found interesting, and names can change over the years. Also, much of my information came from fishermen, who are known to have unsteady relationships with facts. According

to writer Ed Zern, "Fishermen are born honest, but they get over it." With that in mind, let's take a float down the river. If you have the Brule River Sportsmen's Club river maps, follow along. Otherwise, this map can help get you oriented: <https://bruleriversportsmensclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Map-with-photos.pdf>

### Upper River, south of U.S. Hwy 2:

Way up above the Stone Chimney river access, below the junction of the Brule's east and west forks, enters Swamp Angel Creek. The Swamp Angel, whose given name was Charles Landberg, was a popular trapper and fishing guide in the mid-1900s who maintained a cabin along that tiny spring-fed creek. He dammed the creek to make a pond for minnows he used while guiding, and the trickle of water that overtopped the dam spun a little water wheel that generated enough electricity to power the single light bulb in his cabin. On one of our 2024

Sportsmen's Club habitat improvement work days we removed the ancient dam and allowed the cold spring water to rejoin the main stem Brule.

County Highway S crosses the Brule at Stone's Bridge, a popular launching spot for canoe trips. The bridge is named for Judge Horace

Stone, who operated a lodge at the Blue Spring a short paddle upstream.

Downstream from Stone's, past the last of the wing dams, is Carl Miller's Spring. In the 1940s Carl Miller was a fishing guide who worked for John Degerman, proprietor of the Valley Farm Lodge in Highland. Degerman may have frowned upon his employees taking the occasional nip on the job. Rumor has it Carl sometimes stashed a bottle at the spring that bears his name.

Now we're paddling into the famous Cedar Island area.

Just upstream of the Cedar Island Dining Hall is a quick little piece of water called May's Rips. May, the wife of a



*May's Ledges*

barber in Brule, was out for a solo paddle one day and took a spill there. She apparently was popular, and the locals named the spot after her. Much of the land thereabouts, upstream and downstream of Cedar Island, belonged to Capt. Alexander McDougall (1845-1923), ship captain and inventor of the whaleback cargo boats. McDougall Springs retain his name. McDougall's property was eventually obtained by the State of Wisconsin and private parties.

In 1883, oil baron Henry Clay Pierce (1847-1927) and three other men from St. Louis bought the property at Cedar Island after Pierce's timber cruiser, Joe Gheen, told him of the gorgeous setting and fabulous fishing. Joe had a cabin on what is now known as Gheen's Slough. Following a series of transactions, Pierce obtained the entire estate of over 4000 acres, and at one time he and McDougall owned all the land on both sides of the river for over ten

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**BRSC Calendar:**

**The board meeting will be held online on Monday, January 26 at 6:00 p.m.**





## Brule River Sportsmen's Club Meeting Minutes November 24, 2025



President Dennis Pratt called the online meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Officers and Directors: Present – Dennis Pratt, Jeff Stollenwerk, Walt Swanson, and Mike Zicus.

Minutes of the October Meeting: The minutes as written in the November newsletter were approved following a motion by Mike Zicus, second by Jeff Stollenwerk, and unanimous approval by voice vote.

Treasurer's and Financial Secretary's Reports: Treasurer Jeff Stollenwerk reported that October's beginning balance was \$8,040.56, and the ending balance was \$8,487.67 with the following expenses: Pro Print (August and September newsletters) \$291.91; The First Impression Group (28 lower river map posters) \$578.41; Katie Thompson (October newsletter) \$200; Pro Print (October newsletter) \$129.44; JM Screen Print (1,000 club membership stickers) \$600. The Treasurer's report was approved following a motion by Dennis Pratt, second by Mike Zicus, and unanimous approval by voice vote. President Dennis Pratt reported for Financial Secretary Dean Wellman that there were \$2,350.80 in total deposits into the general fund since the last meeting and that the Club had 2 new members and 1 renewal. The Financial Secretary's report was approved following a motion by Walt Swanson and a second by Jeff Stollenwerk.

### Committee Reports

Legislative, Habitat, Scholarship and Membership: Nothing to report.

Audit: Jeff Stollenwerk – Nothing until March.

Education: Dennis Pratt thought the eggs were delivered by Den Smet to Superior High School, Northwestern Middle School, and Hayward Elementary (previously handled by the Wild Rivers TU).

Social Media: Mike Zicus/Dennis Pratt – Mike Sierszen wrote an article that will be featured in our January newsletter.

### Other Business

Paper Newsletter Printing Delay – Paper newsletter took nine days to print. They were mailed the next day.

Great Waters Flyfishing Expo – To be held March 13–15. Mike Zicus will reach out to a former board member living in the Twin Cities to see if he'd be willing to oversee this event.

Next Meeting – January 26 via internet.

Officer Election – Ballots/renewal reminders were mailed with all paper newsletters last week. Electronic ballots will be sent via Constant Contact by Walt Swanson shortly. Pratt will send a Constant Contact renewal reminder in early December. Voting deadline will be January 15.

2026 Raffle – Drawing to be during the August meeting.

Upcoming Events – Please check our [Club Calendar](https://bruleriversportsmensclub.com/category/club-calendar/) at <https://bruleriversportsmensclub.com/category/club-calendar/> for the latest events.

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Recorded by Walt Swanson

"Pools" from pg. 1 miles. Pierce dammed Gheen's Slough, Big Slough, and other spring ponds to separate them from the main river channel and claim them as private property, a status that stands to this day. The Pierce estate became delinquent in taxes during the Great Depression, allowing mining millionaire John Ordway to purchase the place. The estate then passed to John Jr. ("Smoke") Ordway. Smokey's sister? Sally!

Then we get to Sally's Pool. Sally's dock comes off an island with the main channel (Durant's) river right, and a smaller channel (Hungry Run) river left. The river originally flowed river left, until Durant's Channel was dug and diverted the main flow. That left the original run being starved of water, or hungry. As to the dock and Sally's Pool, I've heard accounts of fishermen being greeted by Sally who came across the footbridge spanning Durant's Channel with a complimentary beer. I hope it's true. As an aside, if you've enjoyed the Ordway Theater in St. Paul, you have Sally to thank for the first \$7.5 million to start its construction.

Sally's marks the head of a series of lakes through the next four river miles. Rocky Lake is well named. Have fun wading. Then Wheaton's Lake, named after Dr. Charles Wheaton, a St. Paul physician and surgeon. Cochran Island on Wheaton Lake was the site of many get-togethers among the old upper-river families. Twin Rapids

separates Wheaton Lake from Sucker Lake. The top of the rapids is called the Falls, which isn't formidable though many paddlers have spilled and lost gear there through poor piloting. Don't cut the corner. Sucker Lake leads to Big, Lucius, Spring, and Ashland Lakes, but I find Lucius the noteworthy one, for its namesake.

Lucius Lake (sometimes called Joe's Lake) was named for Joe Lucius (1871-1960), who was a resident of Solon Springs. It seems Lucius' name comes up wherever one looks into the history of the Bois Brule. Lucius apprenticed at the McDougall shipyards at a young age, then in 1893 became caretaker at McDougall's estate and started guiding fishermen on the Brule.

He later operated a small sportsmen's camp at his cabin on the high west bank of Lucius Lake. Joe also worked as a contractor for the old families of the Winneboujou and Gitchee Gumees clubs, building and repairing their lodges and building canoes for those clubs and other river folk. He built big freighter canoes to transport building materials from the railroad station up to the lodge building sites. And he built guide's canoes to take paying fisherfolk out on the river. The famous Lucius freighter and guide canoes were, and still are, treasured for their toughness and elegance. Their historical significance has led two prominent BRSC members, Damian Wilmot and Lloyd Hautajarvi, to restore several of the 100 year-old canoes. I've fished

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with Damian in one, and it's marvelous.

Just upstream from the present Highway B (Winneboujou) bridge is Station Rapids, named for the Winneboujou Railroad Station that served the south shore railroad spanning the river there in the 1890s. Some of the old pilings from that railroad bridge can still be spotted above the canoe landing.

Remember Joe Gheen? He didn't disappear when Pierce dammed his slough; he became the first guide and caretaker for the Winneboujou Club. One day he was returning from town in a freighter canoe loaded with provisions for Club members, and while poling the canoe up the rapids near the current DNR Ranger station, the canoe tipped, sending his cargo down the river. That's the day it became known as Little Joe Rapids.

### Lower River, north of U.S. Hwy 2:

From Highway 2 downstream to near Co-op Park, the Brule is characterized by gentle flows and meanders. The stretch is often referred to as The Meadows, in reference to the farm fields that once bordered the river. Most of the pools are named after landowners, but several names catch the eye. Rocky Run marks the confluence of Rocky Run Creek with the Brule. Below that, the big Box Car Hole was formed when the splash dam built for a log drive was dynamited in 1909 to release the logs held in the impoundment behind it. In that period, over 50 million board feet of lumber were cut from the Brule valley. The deep hole is now a refuge for lake-run brown trout, with no fishing allowed from mid-August until November. Its name derived from a railroad boxcar the landowner once kept there for overnight rental.

Farther along we come to Black Landing, the name of which has been sanitized from the regrettable original, which featured the N-word. Let's just leave it at that. Near High Landing (named for elevation, not illicit recreation) is Motorboat, the location of an old rotting boat. It becomes apparent that some of these names have unlovely origins.

The named pools at Co-op have a more appealing origin story. The local communities (e.g., Oulu, Waino) and roads (Elonen, Hakkinen, Leppanen, Kauppi ...) reveal a strong Finnish influence, and when Finns arrived to the area they sought to develop a sense of community. In about 1930 the Brule Co-op Park was established by Finnish-Americans through shares bought by residents to support its construction and maintenance. There was a large main building with a glassed-in area for social gatherings, movies, music, dances, and sports. Sadly, the facilities are gone, but we do still have the Co-op Hole, Dance Hall, and the Harju and Levenpaa Pools.

The Bayfield Bridge Hole marks the first road crossing of the Brule, by the Bayfield Road that was the first road link between Superior and Bayfield. The road followed the high ground along the Copper Range and skirted the heads of the short tributaries to Lake Superior. A stage line made the first trip in December of 1870. The bridge is long gone, as are the station house, stables, and (unfortunately) the taverns that once stood there.

Not far north of County Road FF are May's Ledges, a picturesque series of sandstone ledges and falls. The ledges are named after Skid May, a local attorney who had a cabin tight to the river on a pool that became known as the Cabin Hole. Sections of the cabin's foundation can still be found. He must have enjoyed the constant roar of the waterfalls. When I tried to get more information about the man, two things became apparent: 1) nobody I spoke to knew his real first name; 2) Skid was not a fisherman, and the activity he was best known for along the river was generously inviting friends in for libations.

Below May's is Anna Niemi's, a big, slow pool named after Anna,

who lived on a farm on the east side of the river. Around the corner is another ledge; on the Sportsmen's Club map; it's labeled Lower Falls, but the pool is better known as Maytag, after the family that owned the land and the cabin above the river. Yes, *that* Maytag. In about a half mile as the merganser flies are the Boat House Hole and Getchell Run, named after former landowners. Walter Selk was one, who did have a boathouse on the big bend, and Getchell later owned it. The land passed to Ron Weber, the man who made a deal with Lauri Rapala to distribute Rapala lures in the U.S. We all know how well that went, and Weber and his family have shown their appreciation by allowing fishers to access the river through their property. But if their gate on Culhane Road is open, have respect and stay away. If you approach along the river and Weber family or guests are fishing, be polite and back off.

Downstream a bit we get to Bachelor's Run and Bachelor's Bend. The real name of The Bachelor was John Clay (hence Clay Road that leads to the parking lot), but people who knew him knew him by his Finnish moniker, Savi Juusi. You can still find the remains of his home and his boat at the bottom of the hill. He kept his old pickup truck on top, knowing that if it rained the truck would never make it up that red clay road.

Then come a few mysteries. The next major bend below Bachelor's is the Pintail Hole. When was the last time anyone saw a Pintail on the Brule? Ever? Maybe there was a rare sighting of one of those elegant birds. The Big Dutchman and Little Dutchman pools always made me wonder who the Dutchman might have been, but I still haven't found an answer. And then, there's Bozzo's Run. Everyone pronounces it like the clown's name, but it has two z's. A friend of mine is a relative of the Bozzo family, and he pronounces it with a short "o" as in "Bob." Call it what you want.

Next, the Rocking Chair Hole is big and comfortable and I think that's reason enough for its label. A few bends below is the Pyramid Rock Hole, which lost its pyramid a few years ago when high water tipped over the distinctive rock. A shame, but the name remains.

Downstream from the Lamprey Barrier is a pool that's designated the Ledge Rock Hole on the Sportsmen's Club map, but most of us call it the 501 Hole. There's a fish refuge below the Barrier extending 500 yards, so the first legal place to fish is at 501 yards. It's a name that makes sense. Finally for this account, a mile from the mouth of the Brule is Weir Corner. From 1957 to 1979, it was the site of an electric weir established to prevent sea lamprey from ascending the river. It succeeded at that, but also caused spinal deformities and other damage to salmonids passing through the electric field. In 1986 it was replaced by the current Lamprey Barrier and Fishway, about 7 river miles from the lake. The Barrier prevents passage of sea lamprey, which are trapped, and the Fishway enables passage, enumeration, and measurement of trout and salmon, providing important data for managing the fisheries.

So concludes our trip down this beautiful, precious river, and I hope you enjoyed it. Pick us up at the mouth.

## **Memberships Expired**

Your membership needs to be renewed for 2026 beginning on January 1. Update your membership in our Club Store at <https://brulriversportsmensclub.com/contact-us/join-the-club/>

<b>BRSC Gift Store Order Form</b> (prices include shipping & handling)			
#	Item	Cost	Total
	Lower river map poster of Brule (36"x24")	\$50	
	Women's baseball hat	\$30	
	Lower Brule River map	\$10	
	Upper Brule River map	\$10	
	Men's baseball cap (mesh back)	\$30	
	Limited edition brook trout print	\$40	
<i>The Brule River Sportsmen's Club, Inc. is a tax-exempt organization defined by Chapter 501 (C) (3) of the IRS Tax Code.</i> <a href="https://brulriversportsmensclub.com/contact-us/join-the-club/">https://brulriversportsmensclub.com/contact-us/join-the-club/</a>			



**What We Do:**

**Fisheries Habitat Projects** — Club members and others volunteer during the summer months to restore features necessary for fish spawning, growing, and feeding.

**Clean-ups** — Keep the Brule clean and beautiful.

**Monthly Membership Meetings** — Frequently include guest speakers.

**Monthly Newsletter** — Helps generate understanding of fisheries and water quality, and keeps members and others informed about Club activities.

**Scholarship Program** — Provides financial support to students.

Newsletter editor: Katie Thompson (goirish@cheqnet.net)

**BRSC Membership Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Type:**     Renewal (due January 1st)     New Membership

*Email newsletter only:*     \$20 – Individual     \$25 – Household

*Paper newsletter only:*     \$30 – Individual     \$35 – Household

**Donations**

College Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Education \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 High School Scholarship \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Habitat \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 General \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Multiple \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Visit us online at [www.brulriversportsmensclub.com](http://www.brulriversportsmensclub.com)*

All information contained herein is confidential.  
 All but \$1.00 of your membership dues is tax deductible.  
 Donations are 100 percent tax deductible.

<b>Officers</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b>
President — Dennis Pratt — <a href="mailto:prattd@charter.net">prattd@charter.net</a> Vice President — Ed Chaplinski Financial Secretary — Dean Wellman Recording Secretary — Walt Swanson Treasurer — Jeff Stollenwerk	Ken Lundberg                      Dennis Smet Paul Helbach                      Jim Waletzko Courtney Johnson              Mike Sierszen Mick Killoren                      Mike Zicus Glen Hill                              Ken Zivic