

Scott E. "Buck" Buckmaster
Old Indian Trail Marker Restoration

5-25-2025

Stone One: Scrape and paint

Anthony Slaughterhawk started on one with me on the shores of Lake Mitchell. He grabbed a brush and helped a bit on this one. He is on retainer with the CAVB, and took some very good images of working on this stone. The location of this stone made it so there were many people passing us and asking questions, so it was nice to share information with the people. I made note to procure more pamphlets from CAVB to share with people that may want to know more about the Trail and history. This marker was different from all the others as it has a green concrete base that it has been mortared into. The condition of this particular stone was very favorable, as I believe its location makes it safe from bad manners.

Stone Two: Scrape and paint

Anthony Slaughterhawk and I moved onto the second one and this one needed to be scraped and painted very similar to the first one, but it was flaking much more than one. This one is located on a corner in a yard, so it is very visible. We enjoyed the beautiful day, and were able to chat. Anthony is an impressive man with many artistic talents. It was nice to learn about his journey. Anthony took images for this stone's activities

Stone Three: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

Anthony Slaughterhawk and I scraped this particular stone down and then this was the first stone that needed some concrete repair. There was gunshot damage, and some corner damage. I made the decision to make repairs, and move onto the next to allow the cement quick patch the opportunity to dry before painting the marker white and redoing the black numbers. This is when Anthony and I parted ways as he had a prior commitment that he needed to attend to. He stated that he would return at a later time to garner images. Anthony took images for this stone's activities, but I took ones after my return.

Stone Four: Scrape and paint

This stone was right off the road, and many people were passing. Numerous people stopped wondering what was up. I explained that the markers were being refurbished. I initially weed whipped around the stone to make sure that it was paintable to grade level, and also to help reduce my interaction with insects such as ticks. I had brought a yard fogger spray and treated the area around the stone. I also made it a point to be wearing a safety vest which helped people to understand that legitimate work was being done. The home across the street ended up coming to life as the neighbors came across the field to start mowing the property. I believe they were curious as to why I was parked on the side of the road in front of the home.

Stone Five: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

The GPS address given in the CAVB pamphlet of this particular stone is a road off to the west of where it is in reality. I think the CAVB should put up a "sorry" or "oops we made a mistake" sign and redirect people to the actual location of marker 5. This was one of the most damaged markers. There was evidence of gun shots, and blunt force damage on the corners as well as prybar marks on the plaque. It looked as if someone was trying to remove the plaque at some point in its history. If this plaque could ever be replaced, it probably should be. I spent a bit of time filling divots, and sculpting corners on this one. I built up these points of need and then allowed it to dry by going back to three to paint the marker and its freshly repaired parts. This worked well. I got a nice image of the stone with the incredibly blue sky. When I picked up after this one, I slid into my truck and noticed a tick was on my pant leg. Ticks are really bad this year, so I make it a habit to spray my pant legs and boots with OFF! To dissuade the little boogers.

I was really pleased with my progress on this first day. I had wanted to get to 5 of them and it fit into the "full day's work" time frame fairly well. It was time well spent and I enjoyed being with my music and thoughts on the quiet back roads of Northern Michigan on a beautiful summer day.

6-1-2025

Stone Six: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

I thought this stone was on a back road, but it was on a driveway. The one person I chatted with was helping the residents with graduation preparations, and recognized the logo on the hat that I was wearing from More Joy Flowers. The owner is my cousin so it was a small world moment. There were road improvements going on this weekend on this road to Meauwataka. For much of my work I felt like an interloper as I was dressed like the road workers but not part of that crowd. These first three stones of the day were directly off the road being repaired, and my speed of working and the necessity of having to come back to these stones made me part of their work scene for the entirety of the day. Breathing asphalt fumes most the day

Stone Seven: Scrape and paint

Parked in a dirt drive just south of the marker. Directly across from a worker that was directing traffic. He watched me most of the time as he talked on walkie talkie.

Stone Eight: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

This stone had pretty profound gunshot damage on the one side, and is located in the woods edge. I see this as an easily missed one, due to it being quickly below road grade and shadowed a good portion of the day. I took it upon myself to clean up a few small trees with a "new to me" brush hook. Traffic was driving by slowly which made it nice for me having to park just off the road as the work on the road was generally keeping pace with my work pace. I did the concrete repair, and moved onto the next stones to give it an opportunity to dry well. I then returned later that afternoon to finish with the painting portion of the work.

Stone Nine: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

This stone had a sizable chunk out of the back corner edge. This did not look like gunfire damage, so considering its location perhaps a tractor damaged it at some time. Once I patched the damaged spaces, I moved onto next to allow for concrete patch drying. I then returned later that afternoon to finish with the painting portion of the work. It was while finishing this painting that Jeff Cline, owner of the property that Stone Ten was on, came back to chat with me while I was painting. He was trying to figure out a way to make it accessible.

Stone Ten: When I initially found this marker just to the north of the Meauwataka intersection, It was behind a fence in a type of pasture. The stone had some need for both paint and concrete repair visible. I did not want to cross the fenceline, so I went to the Meauwataka store to ask for information on property with the marker on it. The owners of the store did not know the owner of the property right off, but a customer that came in for a tallboy did know, and offered to walk me next door to the owner's workshop to see if he was in. I was introduced to Jeff Cline, and he let me know that behind the electric fence was a fenced in Bull. He explained that the Amish had rented the property and that they kept their Bull there. Jeff told me next May before the field gets inhabited that he would allow me to redo the stone marker as he really likes the Old Indian Trail. Jeff Cline and his son stopped by to chat some more when I returned to stone nine to paint it and I gave them a pamphlet from the CAVB.

May go back with a spotter, but will check with Jeff first. Will take probably 2 hours to do what is necessary to fix. North of Meauwataka Store. Will Be calling when Accessible.

Stone Eleven: Scrape and paint

When I initially was searching for this stone it was not where I thought it would be located, and I overshot the location and found myself at a crossroad. I was stopped and looking for the stone when two Brittany spaniel puppies came out of the woods and were prancing about chasing a white butterfly. I was in the middle of nowhere, so the dogs seemed out of place. I got them to come to me and called the phone number on the collar, but no one answered, and I figured out they were from the next road over. While making the call they wandered off down a seasonal road and I figured that they knew better where they were than I knew where I was. As I watched them bounce playfully away over them I saw the stone back about 300 feet from the intersection. This marker was in a very well shaded area, and once completed, the fresh paint helped it to stand out. Hopefully its new white paint will help others to not miss it like I did.

Mileage: 27.9 Miles

6-7-2025

Stone Twelve: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

Damaged a great deal. Right off a busy road way. It looked like it may have sustained traffic damage at some point. Patched the extensive damage, and moved on to next. Allowed for the patch to dry and returned later to paint. At this point a woman stopped to question what I was doing. She asked why I had painted it blue. The blue was the masking tape to protect the marker sign while painting the marker white. After I removed the tape I prepared to repaint the sign black, and she said I should not paint the sign (though it had been painted black at some point). She shared that she had an original "mold" of the signs on the markers that was given to her by the last people to work on the signs. She was very excited to show this to me but she had to get a pizza that she ordered. She asked where I would be when she returned and I explained that I probably would be done with twelve by the time she returned, and that I would most likely be painting thirteen. She said she would hurry up and try to get to me before I was done with thirteen.

Stone Thirteen: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

Located in a ditch near a surveyor's mark on an entrance to a seasonal road. Thorn apples present. Friendly neighbor came over to chat. I shared that I was a Sexton at my real job. Shared that his wife had died. He was discussing her stone he and a son had set. He offered me to use the water from his yard pump if needed. He seemed lonely. I weed whipped this spot, and then began scraping it. Patched it.

When I came back to paint this one, shortly after masking off the sign, the woman from 12 came back to talk to me. She explained that she had her husband looking for the sign, but he thought he may have scrapped it one of the last times that he cleaned out the garage. She very much wanted to be involved with the entire process. I told her thank you and gave her a CAVB brochure, which she went through and proceeded to tell me where all of the markers were. I told her thank you, and started to paint the marker white so I could move onto eighteen

This day I skipped 14,15, and 16 as they were all off the beaten paths and would require more research and effort to get to effectively, to work on or repair. The CAVB pamphlet does not necessarily have a good representation of the locale of these three stones, or the easiest ways to arrive at and access them.

Stone Seventeen: Scrape and paint

The road to this marker has some especially beautiful turn outs as you go by the North country trail area. This stone marker was located near a marker tree so I thought this one was especially interesting. The road was very rural, and I only saw one other vehicle drive by the entire time that I was there painting. I did some basic trimming around it to allow for easier sighting.

Stone Eighteen: Scrape and paint

This stone was right on a corner of a home in the outskirts of Buckley. It was in very good condition but needed paint and a number refresh.

Stone Nineteen: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

Marker Nineteen was due north of 18 and across from a planted pine forest in a field that looks as though it was crop farmed at some time but pines have started to take it over. I patched this stone, and then returned later to finish with the painting after revisiting 12 & 13 . The sky was especially beautiful over the fields here on this day.

Mileage: 81.3 Miles

6-14-2025

Stone Fourteen: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint

This marker is far off the beaten path in an area of abandoned campsites. This is reachable by vehicle, but I would not suggest a car, as even a four wheel drive truck could have been dicey in a couple spots. On my way I actually broke out my chainsaw to remove a tree that had fallen across the road. I drove a long distance into the wilderness on a two track to find this one. I did stop to ask some campers if they knew the area or if they knew where the marker was that I was looking for, but they had no idea. I found 14 on an opening to the river with three campsites close by. The road terminates right there. One of the three campsites seemed to have an abandoned camper on it. I did not investigate this too closely though. There was a sandy beach on this river bend. 14 had a number of painted stones

at the base placed there in the memory of different people that had passed. This marker also seemed newer than the others that I have been working on. I think it may have been a replacement for the original, possibly installed by a Boy Scout Troop that I read about. This was a pretty location right on the river.

Stone Fifteen: Inaccessible at this time. In need of what appears to be extensive repair and paint.

Stone Sixteen: Scrape, concrete repair, & paint, after hiking with supplies into location.

Sixteen was a 45 minute hike with my supplies on the North Country Trail. This was a long drive from 14 because of the way the river flows through the wilderness. Be prepared to go over a rather questionable looking 3 ton weight limit bridge. Where the North Country Trail crossed the main road there was a turn off a short distance to the north of that marker. I unpacked my supplies and placed them in my foldable wagon. I made a tow rope by using a ratchet strap. I walked the road south a bit and then turned east into the wilderness. There are some breathtaking views at various overlooks on this trail. I did not realize it at the time but the walk to this one is a very long uphill grade followed by a quick descent into the river valley. After the quick drop in elevation, I came to the marker. It is located in an area of old growth trees. This high canopy makes it difficult for the smaller trees beneath so it is very shaded and open. While repairing this one, I was visited by some deer. Their snorting caught me off guard, but I smiled and said, "Hello there." At the base of this marker there were two crosses that were burial markers for pets. I guess that people that hiked the trail with their pets may have placed them here for their ever rest. After getting myself packed back up and making the ascent to the upper trail, I had a rather startling event. Two dogs off lead came running over a hill on the trail directly in front of me. It is the first time I have ever drawn my firearm on an animal like that. They were barking aggressively, and fake charging me. I started shouting "Back! Back!" Off in the distance a few moments later I heard someone call off the dogs. Weapon still drawn, I warily continued on my way to the parking lot. I heard the movement off to the west and could see movement in the underbrush, and thought I could make out a person peeking out behind a tree. The person appeared to not have clothing on, and was digging at the tree. I then heard a stick break off to the east and saw a guy dressed in all blue on a hill side walking away from me. This was a very odd, puzzling experience. Once to my truck, I got all my stuff put away, and noticed a Jeep parked at the same pull out as me, and figured that it belonged to whatever it was that I left back on the trail.

Mileage: 53.5 Miles

Overall mileage 162.7