

Up North Classics

YOU KNOW THE PLACES.

You return to them year after year because summer isn't summer unless you get a hit of their "world famous" burger, whitefish sandwich, pan-fried walleye or fresh raspberry pie. These beloved eateries are all over Northern Michigan—out in the woods, down winding country roads, along the waterfront, on the main streets of our small towns—housed in 19th-century saloons, railway stations, funky log cabins and rustic shacks. The menus rarely change. They're unvarnished, unpretentious Up North—just like you remember them.

TEXT BY **PATTY LA NOUE STEARNS** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **BRIAN CONFER**

City Park Grill



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The massive, mirrored mahogany bar at the front of this vintage 1910 restaurant in the Gaslight District is where Ernest Hemingway penned his short story, "Killers." The food here is upscale regional and American with Asian and California influences, the wine list and live entertainment are exceptional, and its happy hour is consistently voted one of the North's best. 432 East Lake Street, Petoskey, 231-347-0101.



Cherry Hut

The 50's look, the all-American fare and Jerry the pie-faced mascot—that's why tourists flock here May through October for a taste of kitsch with their sweet cherry pie. The servers in this retro spot are clad in crisp red-and-white-striped uniforms to match the umbrellas outside. 211 North Michigan Avenue (U.S. 31), Beulah, 231-882-4431.

Saddle Inn

For two decades, locals and Mitchell State Park visitors have flocked to Deborah Odette's eatery for her enormous breakfasts, served anytime, in a late-60's wood-paneled former ice cream parlor with equestrian/cowboy decor. 6080 East M-115, Cadillac, 231-775-0076.

Fischer's Happy Hour Tavern

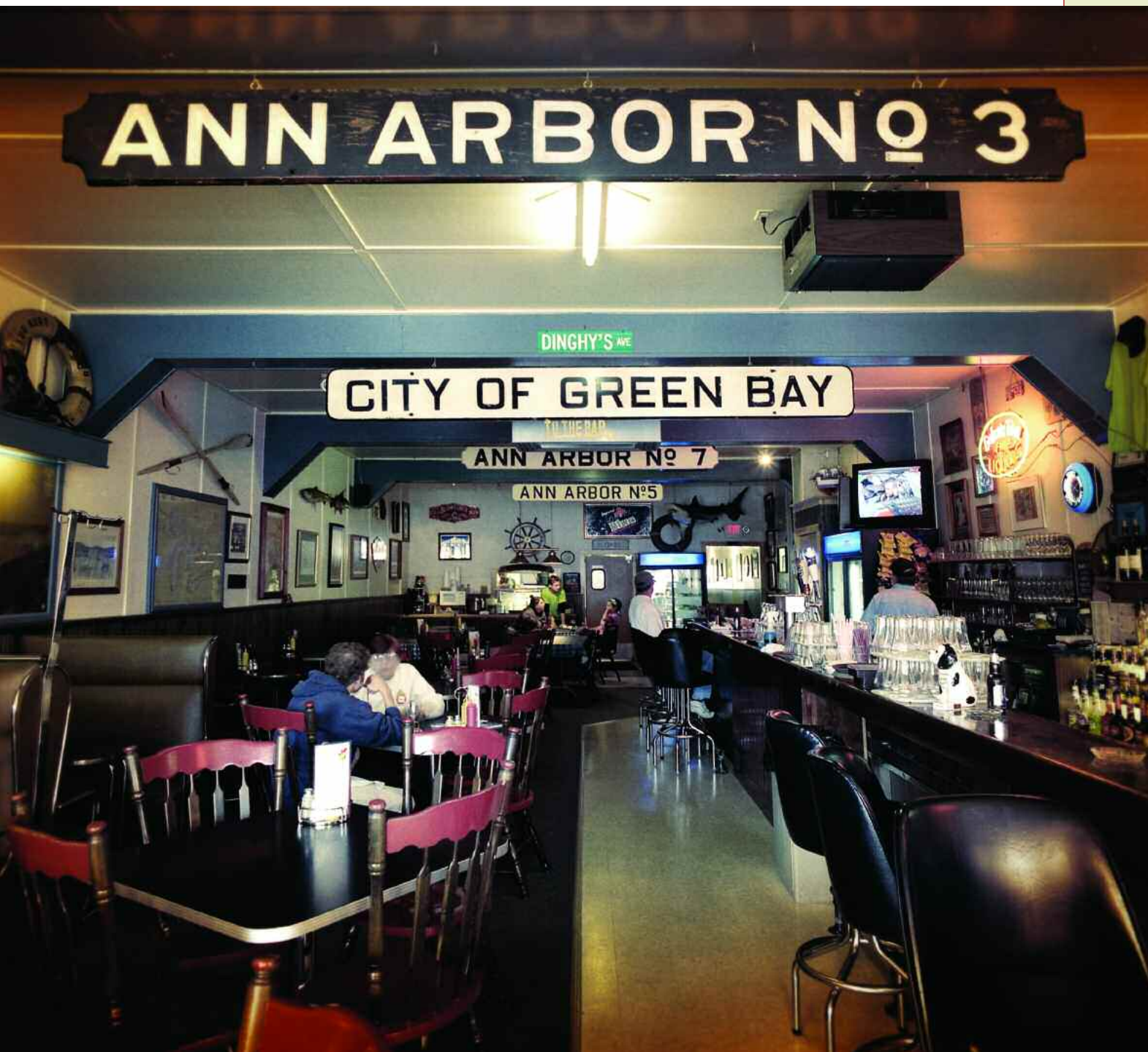
This two-room restaurant in the middle of nowhere has kept diners happy with its juicy burgers, housemade soups and Lori Fischer's fresh raspberry pie for more than 35 years. 7144 North Manitou Trail (M-22), Northport, 231-386-9923.

Timbers Restaurant

A perfect log cabin setting—rustic, woodsy, nostalgic—for pastas and grilled cheese, prime rib and seafood made from scratch by the Lorenz family. 5535 East M-115, Cadillac, 231-775-6751.

Joe's Friendly Tavern

Downtown Empire's rustic emporium for burgers, red bean cakes and sweet potato nachos feels like its name—friendly and familiar. The seats in the booths are well-worn and the paneling is knotty pine in this 70-something landmark. 11015 Front Street, Empire, 231-326-5506.



Dinghy's

Sally Donaldson, former owner and now the main cook, has a huge following for her soups, burgers, house-smoked pork ribs and giant Sunday brunch buffets. And on any given Friday night, the booths and tables are filled with locals and tourists, here for the fabulous fish fry—lightly breaded, all-you-can-eat perch, cod fillets or pan-seared walleye dinners.

With its stained glass, car-ferry signs, sailing memorabilia and vintage photos of Frankfort, this place looks like a dining car out of the last century. It oozes atmosphere. Owner Steve Christian says Dinghy's has been around more than 50 years—and judging from a 1948 photo on one of the walls, it's seen far more Northern Michigan summers than that. 415 Main Street, Frankfort, 231-352-4702.





Bluebird Restaurant & Bar

In high summer, the action in the bar is like old home week—everybody knows everybody. That's because the Bird is the town's unofficial community center.



Three generations of Telgards have kept this legendary restaurant afloat in Fishtown, a tradition that began in 1927 with boat builder Martin and wife Leone (Carlson, of fisheries fame), then Jim and Nancy, and now Skip and Lynne. Famed

Hack-Ma-Tack

Watson Beebe built this inn in 1834 as a hunting and fishing lodge on Mullett Lake, between Indian River and Cheboygan on the Inland Waterway. Now owned by the Redding family, it's rustic yet elegant, surrounded by enormous trees just outside the dining room windows. The Reddings serve topnotch food—lobster tail, filet mignon, prime



rib and "nationally famous" whitefish, and service is extraordinary. 8131 Beebe Road, Cheboygan, 231-625-2919.



Hofbrau

In business more than 75 years, as a general store, then a tavern, and now a rustic eatery for musicians, this is where celebs and students mingle, pre- and post-concerts at the nearby Interlochen Center for the Arts. And it's where they inhale a huge brunch every Sunday. 2784 M-137, Interlochen, 231-276-6979.

Stafford's Weathervane

Famed builder Earl Young turned this into a boulder-clad restaurant in 1954. One of the fireplaces features a Michigan-shaped, pink-veined stone. The cozy bar scene and formal dining room with a view of the Pine River Channel are pure Up North. 106 Pine River Lane, Charlevoix, 231-547-4311.

Sugar Bowl

Like something out of an Alpen fairy tale, the Bowl has graced Gaylord's Main Street since 1919 and is a fine stop for whitefish, prime rib and a Bavarian-style hit of the North. 216 West Main Street, Gaylord, 989-732-5524.



for its whitefish, perch and fresh-baked cinnamon rolls that accompany every dinner entree, the Bird overlooks the Leland River. Depending on your mood, choose from fine dining à la tablecloth with entrees like rack of lamb, steaks and osso bucco, or pizza and burgers in the bar. 102 River Street, Leland, 231-256-9081.

Argonne Supper Club

It's 4:45 p.m. and the parking lot is full of patrons, waiting in their cars for the doors to open. They're here for the all-you-can eat "world famous" shrimp: batter-fried or boiled. The Argonne, a former speakeasy, is more than 75 years old, although the dining room—lace curtains, pink walls and tablecloths—has a 60's feel. Come with a giant appetite. 11929 Boyne City Road, Charlevoix, 231-547-9331.



Old Depot

The original 1903 restaurant, a former Michigan Central Railroad station, was demolished in 2002 after a tragic accident. But the Pohutsky family is back at it in their new building, making the from-scratch food they're known for. Expect giant portions and homemade pies, cobblers and cakes. 10826 East M-32, Johannesburg, 989-732-3115.



Boone's Long Lake Inn

This rough-hewn log interior makes people Paul Bunyan—hungry, which is why they consume huge platters of beef that could feed a family of four. But hey, this is a steakhouse, and this is what you do when you come to Boone's, presumably with an empty stomach. 7208 Secor Road, Traverse City, 231-946-3991.

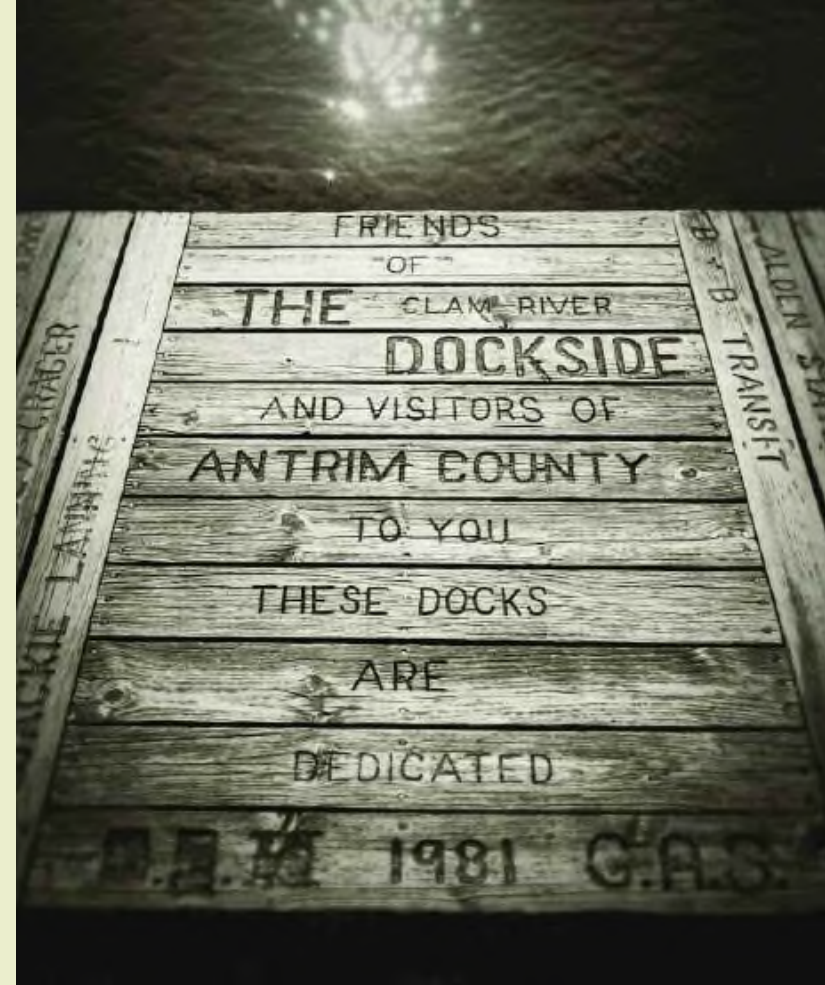




Spike's Keg O' Nails

It calls itself "The Meeting Place of the North." But the front door looks like a boy's clubhouse that might have hand-scrawled words across that say, "girls keep out." And truly, you see few females inside this dark-wooded, open-beamed shack of a place, with church-pew booths and names carved into them, beer-keg lights, fishermen's memorabilia and carpeting that looks like it has never been cleaned. Which is probably why wet waders are welcome here.

Don't look down; eat one of the fabulous "world-famous" Spikeburgers, and read the menu, which details how Harold "Spike" MacNeven, a tireless promoter of Grayling's canoeing reputation, opened this place the day after Prohibition ended in 1933. 301 North James Street, Grayling, 989-348-7113.



The Dockside

In the early 1900's this building on Torch Lake was a post office, then it was a general store, and in the 60's it became a bar and restaurant. Clearly, it needed a deck for lakeside dining. To fund it in the 1980's, patrons bought the deck boards, on which their names and other sayings were carved. Now, thanks to those loyal customers, you can take in aquamarine Torch Lake and its prismatic sunsets—astounding from the deck of the Dock, which sits at road's end at the mouth of the Clam Lake inlet.

Owner Gordie Schaefer's motto: "No shirts, no shoes, no big deal." By day, it's a family restaurant; nights and weekends, the bar crowd's big. Boaters tie up here and ask for the burgers, especially on "Thirsty Thursdays." Schaefer says he sells five tons of hand-ground burgers every season. 6340 South East Torch Lake Drive, Bellaire, 231-377-7777.



Sleder's

Bohemian wheelwright Vencel Sleder built this saloon in Slabtown more than 120 years ago, and it's the one of the state's oldest. Eat burgers, deep-fried pickles, listen to live entertainment, and kiss the moose on your way out. 717 Randolph Street, Traverse City, 231-947-9213.

Dam Site Inn

Built in 1953, and it looks that way, with its Space Age seating and white-tablecloth service. The hand-dusted, lightly pan-fried all-you-can-eat chicken special is like Grandma used to make, and the lavishly landscaped grounds can be viewed from one of six dining rooms in this cavernous place. Oh yes: There's a dam, and this eatery sits near the site, on the Maple River. 6705 Woodland Road, Pellston, 231-539-8851.

Brown Trout

Who can't love this 1930's log cabin with its high ceilings, amber lighting with twig, antler and pine motif, the animal mounts, the vintage signs, the log tables and chairs, the plaid carpeting? Beyond ambience, the food is delish—burgers, steaks, sandwiches, prime rib, smothered chicken and shrimp. 4653 South Straits Highway, Indian River, 231-238-9441.

Pink Pony

No trip to Mackinac Island is complete without a stop at the Pony in the circa-1900 Chippewa Hotel. Happy Hour is a happenin' in this pink-awned Victorian-style pub, where burgers, salads, ribs, fish and pasta are eaten with great relish after a few brewskis are downed. 800-241-3341 or 906-847-3341.

Vivio's Northwoods Inn

Another log cabin, more woodsy atmosphere, same town. This restaurant's fragrant with Italian-American food and divine pizzas. 4531 South Straits Highway, Indian River, 231-238-9471.

The Side Door Saloon

"Home of the hand-spanked burger." Say no more. It's Up Northy in every way, with green plaid carpeting, pine paneling, animal mounts, a canoe suspended from the ceiling and a pool table in the corner. "You'll never miss the water" is this landlocked eatery's motto. True, the patio and live music are plenty. 1200 North U.S. 31, Petoskey, 231-347-9291. T

Contributing editor Patty LaNoue Stearns is author of *Cherry Home Companion* and *Good Taste: A Guide to Northern Michigan Cuisine*. patty@traversemagazine.com