

ESCAPE NORTH

PASSENGER RAIL



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2010-2011

Escape North

Escape North promotes luxury rail travel as a means of visiting and experiencing the beauty of Northern Michigan. Using 20th century design as inspiration, I have used my skills as a graphic designer to create and implement a design brief for the company. The promotional and identity pieces use a mix of serif and sans serif fonts, creating a luxurious feel. The brief explores the possibility of using passenger rail, once again, as a means of luxury travel, hopefully bringing back a time when travel was glamorous and people could enjoy themselves on the way to their destination. Northern Michigan is the perfect destination for the exploration of this conceptual work.



Concept

In order to arrive at the overall concept of my project, I asked myself questions such as what is our (and specifically my) nostalgia and infatuation with the past? What is it in particular about objects that hold a nostalgic memory that cause them to hold a special place in our heart? From these ideas and questions, I merged two themes- nostalgia and travel, blended to be represented through travel to Northern Michigan. Northern Michigan is my home away from home, my outlet from the hustle and bustle of Lower Michigan, my escape. When I was young, Northern Michigan was a consistent vacation destination for my family. The dramatic difference in lifestyle between my home and Northern Michigan, a place only 4 hours away, has always struck me as something truly amazing. Over the years, Northern Michigan has become my second home, and the people I have met, several of whom have become adopted grandparents and aunts, have become an important part of my life. The significance of Northern Michigan and my adopted family in my life strongly influenced me to share the beauty of Northern Michigan with others. With this in mind, my Senior Integrative Project explores how I, a graphic designer, can create promotional materials that will convince people that taking public transportation to the vacation destination is more relaxing, entertaining, and pleasant than driving. My challenge was to create a brand that would evoke nostalgia for luxury railroad travel.

Design Inspiration

When exploring the look and feel of Escape North, it was from a design and marketing perspective necessary to look at successful passenger rails of the past. One of my biggest inspirations was George Pullman. In 1862, George Pullman revolutionized train travel with the design of his trains. He designed one of the first luxury trains to run during the 19th century during the heightened appeal of train travel. Inspired by his uncomfortable experience traveling a long distance by train, he built luxury sleeping cars, packed with decadence and sophistication. The new train cars had everything including carpet, upholstered chairs and great customer service. The trains, and especially the dining cars, were said to be "the picture of extravagance, with elaborate chandeliers, silk shades and leather seating"(The History of Pullman Cars). They were themselves a work of art. Pullman train cars turned passenger rail into not only a means of transportation and a way to unite the country, but a luxury event. I especially enjoyed the sophistication and feel of the inside of the trains, and the special attention to detail.



The inside of a luxury Pullman train car

The Michigan Central Railroad was also an inspiration in the development of this brand. I was interested in this railroad because it was an important railroad line that used to run within Michigan. Further, one of the Northern Michigan train depots is located in Charlevoix, Michigan. That depot reflects the type of public transportation that used to run within Michigan and its contribution to the State. Since the Michigan Central Railroad it is no longer running, I look to bring back both memories and nostalgia of what a passenger rail could be like if that railroad again ran through Michigan. My decision to reflect on passenger rail throughout Michigan's past, and to brand a train specific to Michigan, is important to my project. As a Michigan resident, I have noticed that despite efforts to promote tourism throughout the State, there are few attempts made to encourage its residents or visitors to use public transportation in connection with that tourism.

A passenger rail would allow a fast, safe and cheaper means of traveling through the state. Further, the train as a means of transportation to Northern Michigan explores the possibility of allowing larger groups to travel together, experiencing the scenery and beauty of the State without the concerns of traffic or weather. This is especially appealing in the winter months, when Michigan roads often become snow covered and dangerous. Escape North would also allow space for larger luggage such as skis for a ski weekend or golf clubs in the summer months.

Greatly inspired by the Pullman train line, the Michigan Central Railroad, and the absence of luxury train lines currently in Michigan, I wanted to re-create an elegant train line that would be sophisticated and elegant while still appealing to travelers of all kinds. The line would present the opportunity to once again use a passenger rail to travel throughout Michigan, creating nostalgia for what there once was.

Promotional Material Development

In the development of my marketing and promotional materials, and the desire to capture nostalgia in my materials, I turned to vintage (1920's) railroad promotional material for inspiration. Much of this promotional material played up the idea of meeting and socializing with interesting, well-dressed fellow travelers. The friendly feel of the posters as well as the light, muted color palette and whimsical typography intrigued me.



Vintage (1920s) Railroad Promotional Poster

NEW YORK CENTRAL'S
NEW Luxury Coaches-
 adding enchantment
 to your first post-war
 vacation!



FIVE solid gleaming miles of luxury coaches are rolling off the production lines. They're alive with the up-to-the-minute features for which thousands of New York Central passengers voted. And many of these cars of tomorrow are ready today for your first post-war vacation. Ready to carry you, at low coach fares, on your way to the Adirondacks, New England, Niagara Falls, Canada, the Great Lakes or the Western Wonderlands.



Vacation All The Way! Luxury Dressing Rooms! Try This For Size!

Vintage Promotional Poster for New York Central

RAILROADING IS
People

Nothing in this world is as interesting as—people! Nothing is as important as people . . . people who live and grow, love and get married . . . people with their habits and manners, their likes and dislikes. Nothing really matters but—people.

The city? We think of it as people. The countryside is people. And so is the railroad . . . just folks—all of them!



Vintage Promotional Poster for New York Central

I realized that in order to portray and captivate a feeling of nostalgia I would have to illustrate the images for my posters, just like they did in the 1920's, and I used the illustrations in my designs to help demonstrate a feeling that my train would have. I specifically used the dining car image to show the great attention to detail embodied in the Pullman train cars. I use the illustration to "paint a picture" of what it would feel like to be inside the train on your way to Northern Michigan. Keeping Pullman trains, as well as the vintage promotional material in mind, the illustration shows well-dressed travelers, tables with white linen table clothes, chandeliers, and an overall elegant dining room. The text at the bottom complements the image with its old style typefaces and whimsical ornaments.

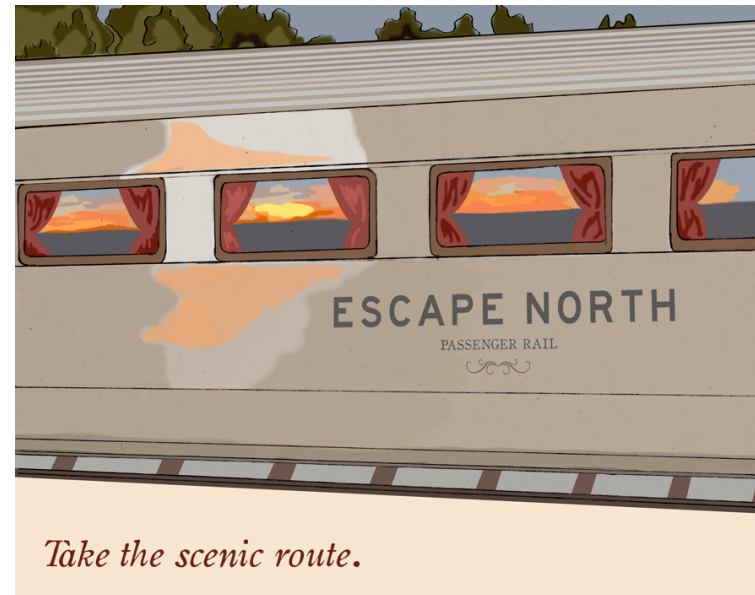
I continued with the same style on the other promotional posters, using illustration to show the outside of the train car. The drawing of the train was extremely important because it could not look like a commuter train; rather, it had to take on the feeling of a passenger rail that would be used for longer trips. Color also took on an important role in the development of these illustrations. I wanted the color to look old but not worn and dirty, and to have a sleek, vintage feel. I used many different shades of grey to accomplish this goal. Hints of color from the inside of the train were used as decorative elements on the outside of the train, as in the curtains.



Promotional poster design for dining car on Escape North



Outside view of Escape North Passenger Rail



Take the scenic route.

Close up view of Escape North Passenger Rail with passing Northern Michigan scenery

Name Development

In the development of this passenger train line, I went through a series of names that I felt were qualified for my brand. When developing names, I brainstormed ways to express my feelings towards Northern Michigan. Some key questions that were raised during the logo development were: What types of words would you use to define up north? What are these words communicating? These questions made me realize that my logo should reflect an experience, just like I wanted the train to. I considered the use of the name “Ad-venire,” meaning adventure in Latin. To me, while the word sounded sophisticated and made the potential passenger think a bit, the term didn’t have such a clear meaning. After much additional consideration, I realized that it would be to my benefit to have the name be simple and easy to understand. This is when I arrived at: Escape North. The name is to the point, and expresses my exact feelings toward the destination, an escape.

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The Logo and Brand

Developing the logo from the product name, of course, was not a simple task. The logo is the first means of communicating the brand to the viewer, and every design choice is crucial. In all of my designs, I drew upon inspiration from the Victorian era, which heavily influences nostalgia for objects of the past. One initial idea was to go with a hand-drawn font in order to replicate the early 20th century hand lettering, one-of-a-kind feeling that was done in many labels and other promotional materials. Another was to produce a retro-style logo with a script-like delicate feel. These designs explored variations using design elements from the 20th century; a mixture of fonts, frames, borders, ribbons and other decorative elements. After many critiques, I realized that in order to create the luxury feel for a train line, I would need to use a basic heavy san serif font mixed with a serif old style small caps font. These typefaces were chosen because of their close similarities to the mixtures of typefaces used on vintage promotional material. After choosing the typefaces, and the perfect mixture of serif and san serif, I inserted an ornament at the bottom of the logo.

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Branding

Design Collateral

Creating the design collateral was another important process that followed the development of my logo and the style that I wanted for my brand. The design collateral helped to continue to set the nostalgic tone that I was aiming for, demonstrating how the entire brand could look uniform and work together as a whole. In the design of these materials, I continued to use 20th Century design as inspiration, using a mixture of fonts and decorative elements such as delicate lines and ornaments. In addition to design collateral helping to set a tone, it also made Escape North come to life. It showed how a particular idea and style could work together to form a brand and how an audience would use the brand, from the train schedule (picking a time to travel), to the ticket (required for boarding the train), and finally to the menu (being inside of the train car). I focused on keeping everything within the collateral cohesive as a unit. The colors chosen for the collateral were based off the tone used for the promotional posters, consisting of blacks, and muted greens and yellows. In conscious effort to remain simple and elegant, only minimal color was used on all pieces of collateral.

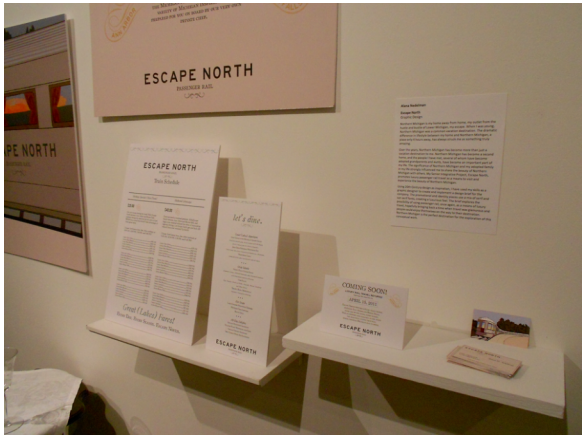


Train ticket, one piece of the design collateral

Up and Running

Escape North has taught me what it takes to create and develop brand from start-to-finish. I am confident that I have created a successful and positive brand and design collateral, turning the vision of Escape North into a real possibility - and the outcome has been more than I ever hoped it would be. Inspiration by the nostalgia of historical luxury train travel, and the desire to incorporate vintage materials initially created numerous options for my project, and I am happy with the choices that I made and the end result. Particularly exciting is that while this brand remains conceptual, many have expressed interest in it actually existing. As an artist and designer, I feel that the concept of Escape North has completed its ultimate goal when the public wants to actually ride the passenger rail that currently exists only in my imagination. I believe that Escape North has raised the prospect of renewed public transportation between Lower and Northern Michigan, and hopefully one day it will actually exist!





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