

What Thoreau wrote about Michigan

On the way west:

Detroit to Chicago – Very level to Ipsylanti – then hilly to Ann Arbor – then less hilly to Lake M. All hard wood or no evergreen except some white pine when we struck Lake Michigan on the sands from the lake partly & some larch before – phlox varying from white to bluish -- & paint cup ? deep scarlet -- & also yellow ? or was this wall flower ? All very very common thro' Michigan & the former, at least, earlier

The one dollar houses in Detroit are the Garrison & the Franklin H.

Fencing on RR in Canada & Michigan narrow boards -- & Virginia fence – no posts & rails

Carp River [Leland]:

28" at eve leave Sheboygan & steam NE to Carp River

29 10 am at Carp River – Claspig houndstongue the prevailing weed

Shepherdia leaves -- & Indians & Carp Lake

Pass Manitou Islands on left in forenoon & op. Fox islands run into Carp River & leave there at noon & steam N x W to Beaver (or morman islands) with the first hut & mormon houses – Leave there at eve & reach Mackinaw 2 am

unknown Borriginaceous plant – all down the Lake & St. Lawrence – the first esp. at Carp River – Mackinaw & Ogdensburg – The 2d Ogdensburg – Toronto & Mackinaw --

Mackinac Island:

Get wood from islands over ice – Plainly see a light house 25 miles off – Used cedar bark for roofing & clapboards. Some wild Ind. from Eastward still offer tobacco – leave it on the rocks at Mackinaw – No fur trade of consequence for 20 years

Ice forms about mid of Jan & lasts firm till April – Mail from S (i.e. Chicago) along shore on the beach from Saginaw River by 2 Indians (14 employed) with a dog team if snow not too deep – Taking 1 week -- Ice at head of L. Superior quire recently

Offer buttermilk at dinner instead of water – had to ask for water –

Sat by fire July 2d – They think trout not as good as white fish.

Mackinac Island (continued):

Mackinaw boat 2ty to 30 ft round bottom sharp stern & so can land in a sea the waves not crossing over stern

apple in bloom -- & lilac

[Thoreau included a four-page inventory of plant names, from trees like arbor vitae and sugar maples, to flowers like yellow ladies slippers and dandelions (“very abundant – even throughout woods”).]

On Mackinac Island, Thoreau must have met **William Miengun Johnston (1811-1863)**, who was serving as the Mackinac County clerk at the time. (Mackinac Island acted as the county seat of Mackinac County until 1882, when the offices moved to St. Ignace.) His father was Irish (John Johnston) and his mother was Ojibwe (Ozhauscadaywayquay, known as “Susan”). William’s oldest sister, Jane, was the first wife of explorer / ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, whose books Thoreau had read. Though William was said to be the black sheep of the family, his knowledge of local history and native culture was considered accurate enough to be included in the book *Old Mackinaw: Or, the Fortress of the Lakes and Its Surroundings* by William Peter Strickland (Philadelphia: James Challen & Son, 1860). He evidently enjoyed telling tales and recounting the folklore of the area. Thoreau mentions Johnston twice in his trip notebook and jots down some of the key topics of his stories. He probably didn’t know that he was talking with Henry Schoolcraft’s brother-in-law.

Additional Thoreau connections with Michigan

Teacher **Calvin Harlow Greene (1817-1898)** of Rochester, Michigan, became a Thoreau fan after reading *Walden*. He began corresponding with Thoreau and asked the author for a photograph in a letter in early 1856. Henry did not have one at the ready. “You may rely on it that you have the best of me in my books,” Thoreau replied, “and that I am not worth seeing personally – the stuttering, blundering clod-hopper that I am.” Nevertheless, he sat for three daguerreotypes to be taken during his next visit to Worcester, Mass., in June 1856. He gave two of the prints to friends in that city. He mailed the third one to Calvin Greene. It is now kept in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. The other two are in library collections in New York City and Lincoln, Massachusetts.

Dr. Samuel Arthur Jones (1834-1912) was a homeopathic physician who moved to Ann Arbor in 1875. He too fell under the spell of *Walden*. But by that time, Henry Thoreau was gone. Dr. Jones began corresponding long distance with some Concordians who still remembered the man. By 1889, Jones himself was writing and publishing essays and delivering lectures on the topic of Henry Thoreau in Ann Arbor. He “discovered” and met Calvin Greene in Rochester in 1897. Jones is considered one of the first researchers to further Thoreau’s legacy and to establish his literary reputation.