

A Year in the Life of Alexander Henry

Adapted by

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Illustrated by **Clare Friend**



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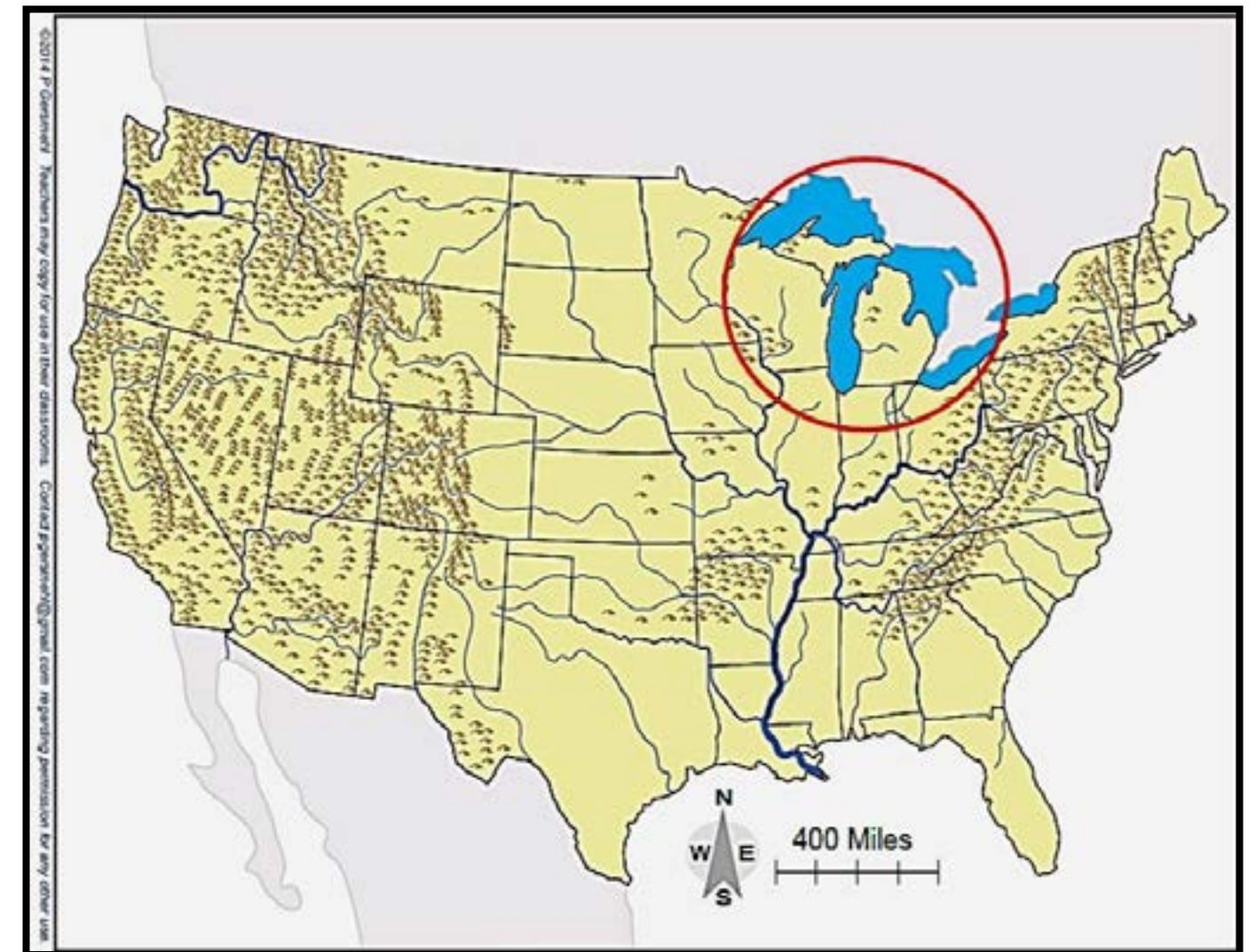
The Ojibwa and the Chippewa tribes lived in the Upper Great Lakes region and survived the seasons by hunting and fishing and using the resources of their environment. In the 1700's they traded furs for guns, ammunition and other manufactured goods with French fur traders called voyageurs and with a few British fur traders. In 1763, the British won the French and Indian War; Fort Michilimackinac came under British control. Some of the Native American tribes had issues with the British, and attacked the Fort. Our story is based on the capture of a British fur trader named Alexander Henry, and his subsequent release to his Ojibwa friend, Wawatam. Alexander lived with Wawatam's family for a year, experiencing the way of life of the Ojibwa throughout all four seasons of the year.

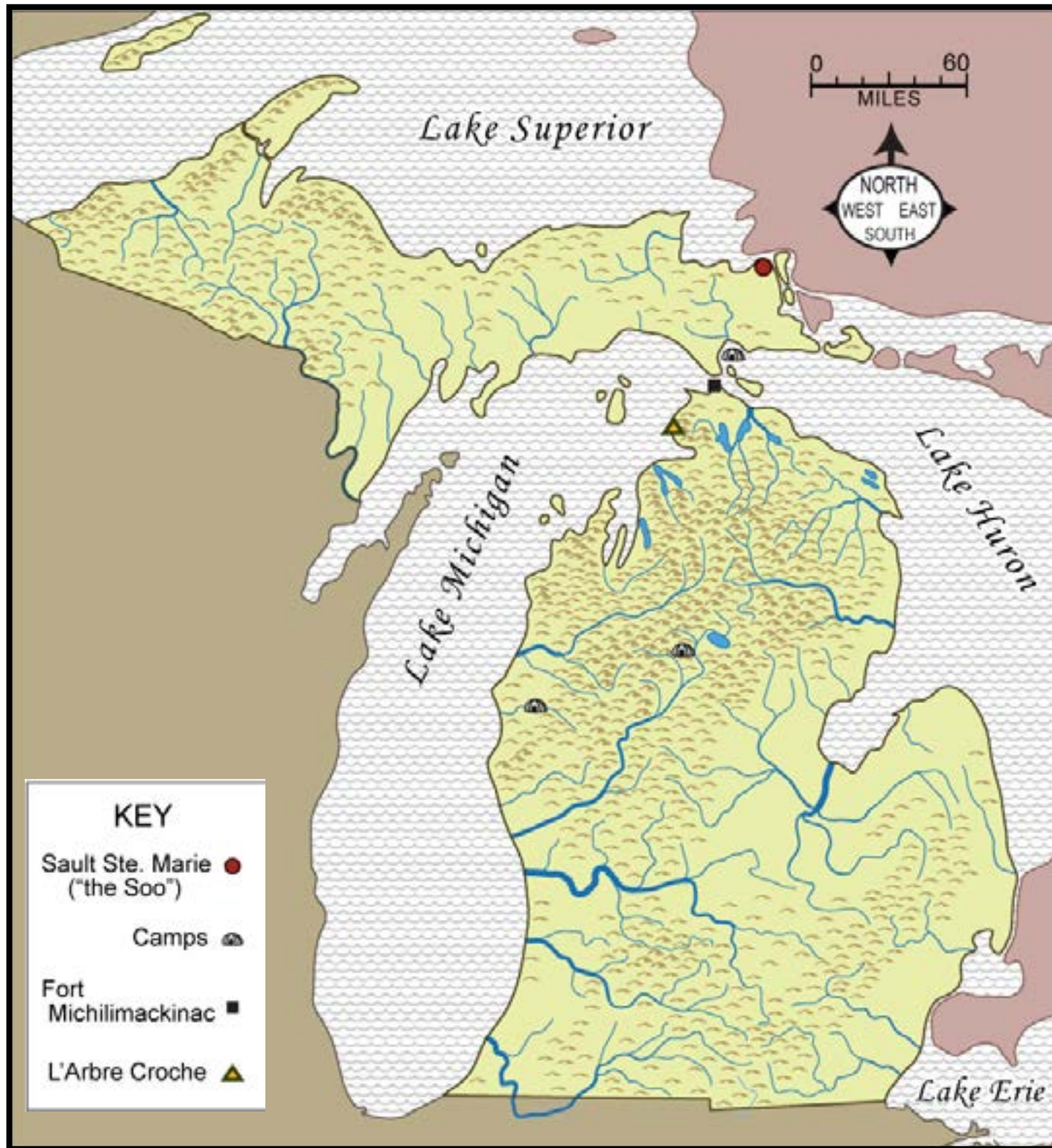
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Dedication:

To all students of the
Geography and History
of Michigan.



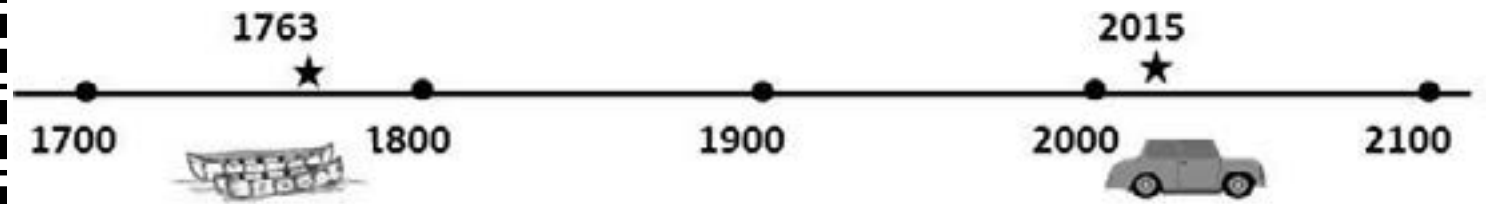


A Year in the Life of Alexander Henry



A Year in the Life of Alexander Henry

Our story begins in 1763.



Alexander Henry was a **fur trader** who traveled to the place we now call Michigan. He bought furs from Native Americans who lived near the Great Lakes. Traders sent furs of wild animals back to Europe. The people there especially wanted the beaver fur to make **felt** for hats.



Alexander visited both the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan. The maps in this book will show the places where he lived during one year.

In June, 1763, a group of Ojibwa captured Alexander Henry during a battle. Luckily, Alexander's Ojibwa friend Wawatam adopted him after the battle. Alexander traveled with this friend and his family for a year.

Here is Alexander's story.

My New Family

I was lucky to have an old friend among the Ojibwa. My friend Wawatam adopted me into his family. He had a wife, two sons and a daughter. His oldest son was married, and his wife was with us also. I became the seventh member of the family. My new family dressed me like an Ojibwa Indian!

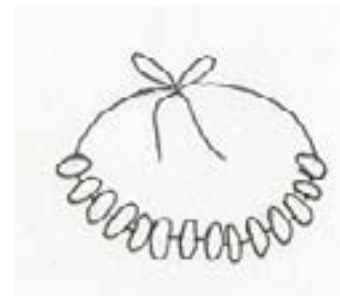
Adapted from Alexander's Diary:

Wawatam's family cut off my long hair and shaved most of my head. They left a small patch of hair at the top where they would put feathers. They painted my face with red and black colors.

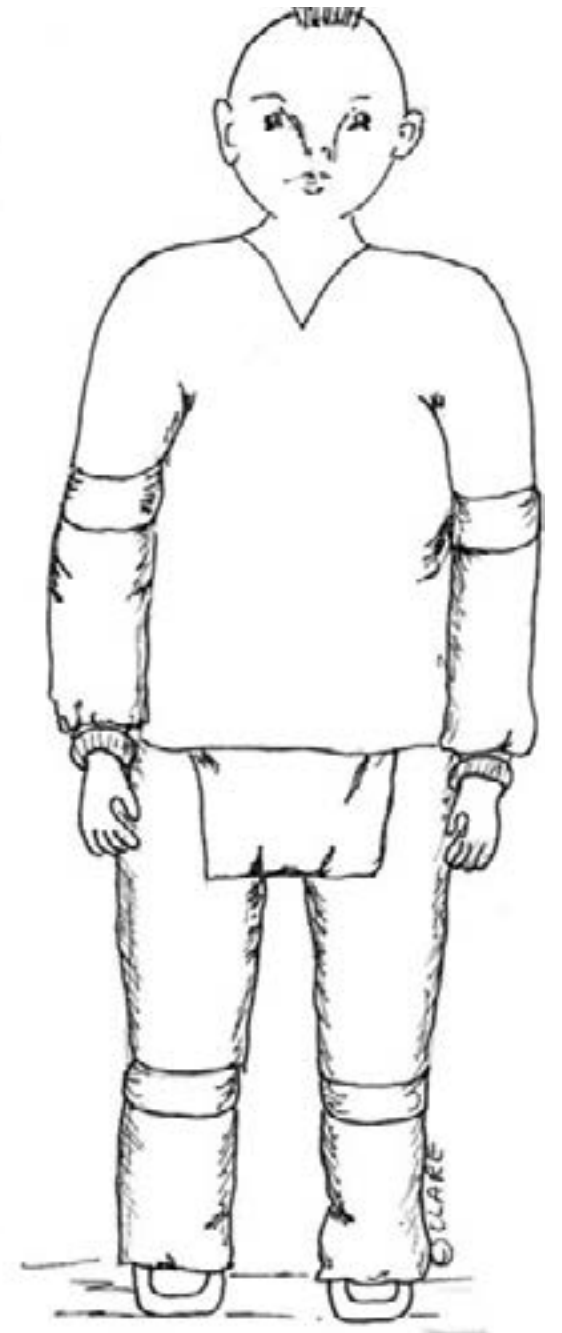
The family gave me a shirt that was painted with vermillion (reddish orange) color that was mixed with grease. They loaned me large silver bands to wear above each elbow and smaller bands for my wrists. Around my neck, I wore a wampum collar made of beads. On my legs, I wore leggings made of scarlet (red) cloth.

The three women of the family thought I looked much better in my Indian clothes. They thought I was handsome.

Color the picture using information from the diary.



A wampum necklace is made of beads or shells and sometimes was used as money.



Write two comparison sentences:

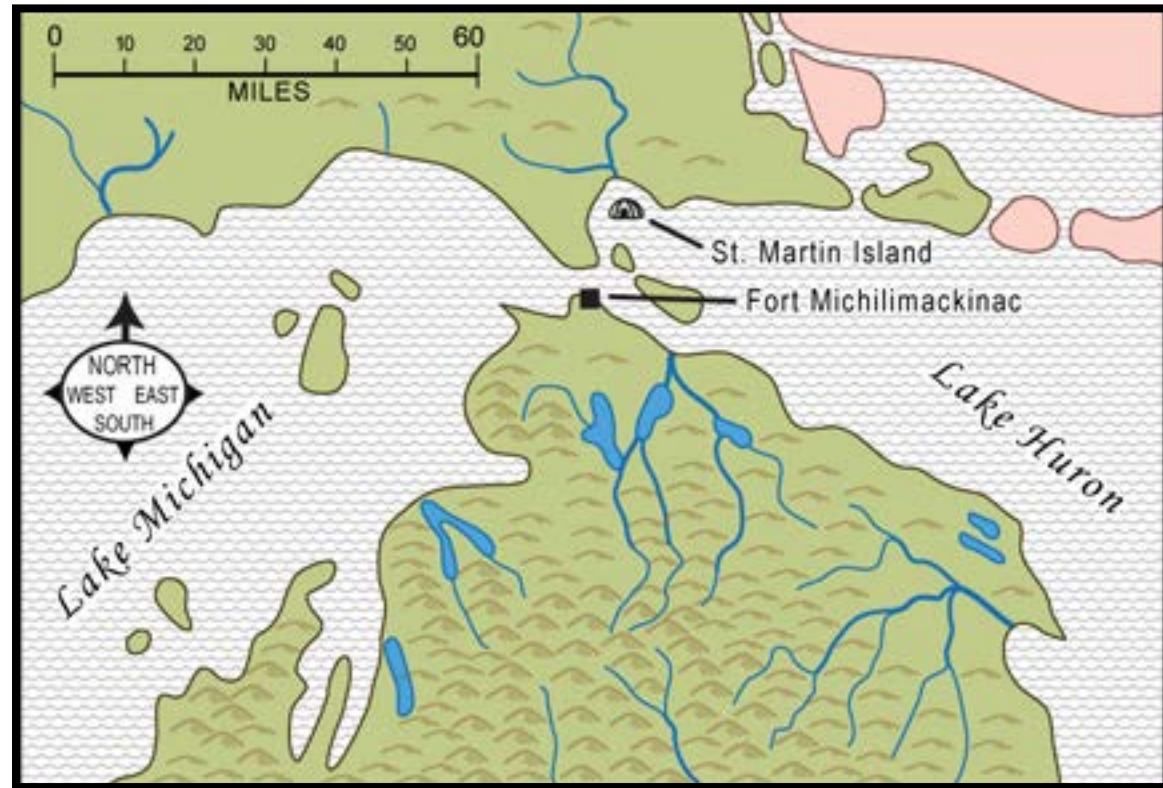
How did Alexander dress like me?

How did Alexander look different from me?



Summer Travels

It is June, and the summer sun can be very warm. We left Fort Michilimackinac and paddled our canoes to St. Martin Island to spend the summer.



St. Martin Island is in which Great Lake?

What two directions did Alexander travel to get to St. Martin Island? (Use the compass rose.)

About how far did he have to paddle? (Use the scale.)

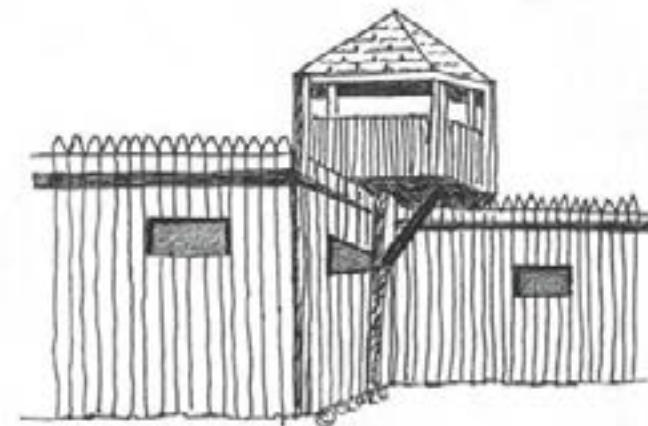
About 5 miles About 15 miles About 40 miles



On St. Martin Island we built a **lodge** for all seven adults. While we were there, Wawatam's son and his wife had a baby. We had plenty to eat in summer because we could hunt ducks and other water birds.



We fished for **sturgeon**. Those are really big fish! Some weighed more than 100 pounds. My family not only ate the sturgeon meat, but used the skin and oil.



We stayed on St. Martin Island until the middle of August. Then we returned to Fort Michilimackinac.





Autumn Jobs

It is the end of August. We had to get ready to travel many miles to our hunting camps. At Fort Michilimackinac we bought supplies for our trip.



We signed a **credit slip** to buy ammunition for our guns and two **bushels** of **maize** (corn). We promised to pay for the hunting and food supplies when we returned next spring.

If one bushel of corn weighs 56 pounds, how much would 2 bushels weigh?

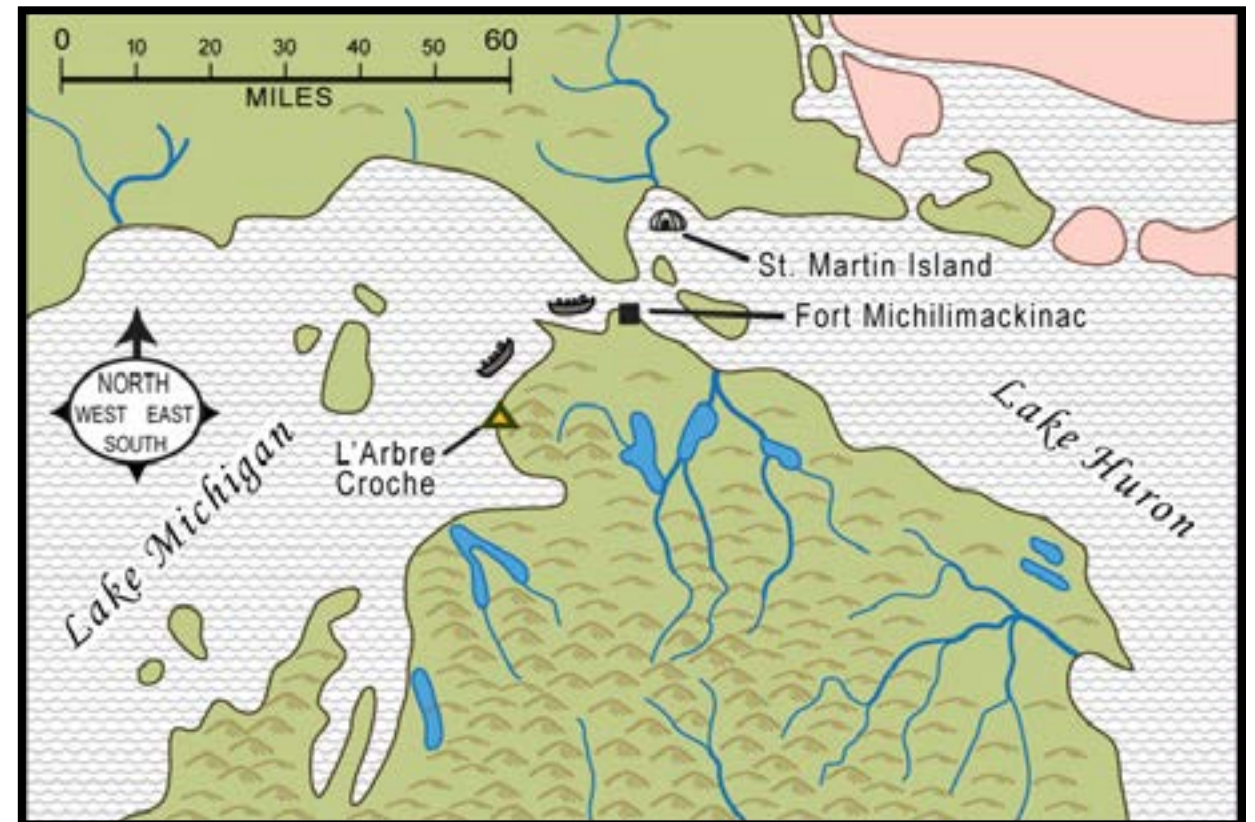
How much would 4 bushels weigh?

Do you weigh more or less than a bushel of corn?

What do we use today that is like the "credit slip"?



After loading our canoes, we headed to Lake Michigan. We stopped at a village called L'Arbre Croche (crooked tree). The Ottawa Indians there gave us another bag of maize.



Fort Michilimackinac is in between what two Great Lakes?



About how many miles do the canoes travel between the fort and L'Arbre Croche?

(Use the scale.)

Less than 10

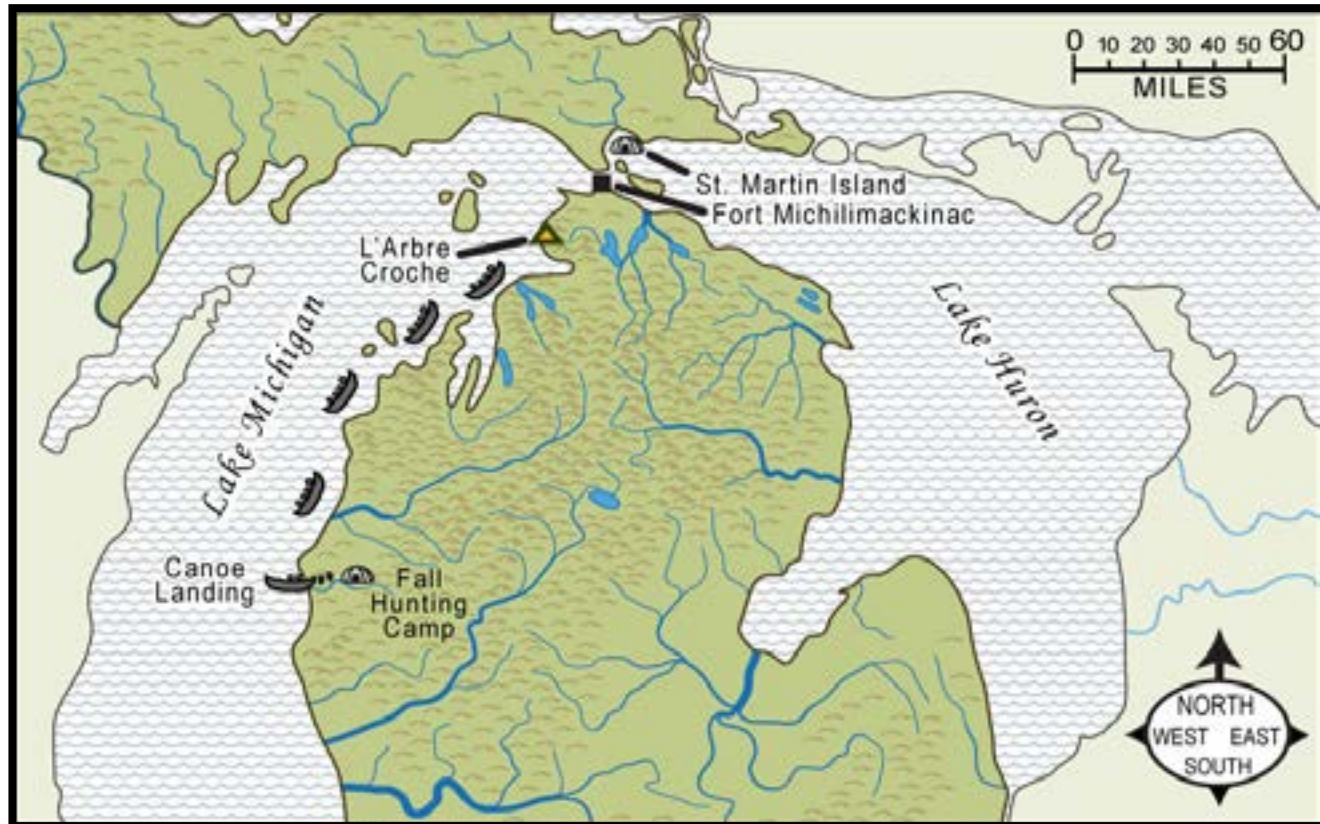
About 15

More than 30





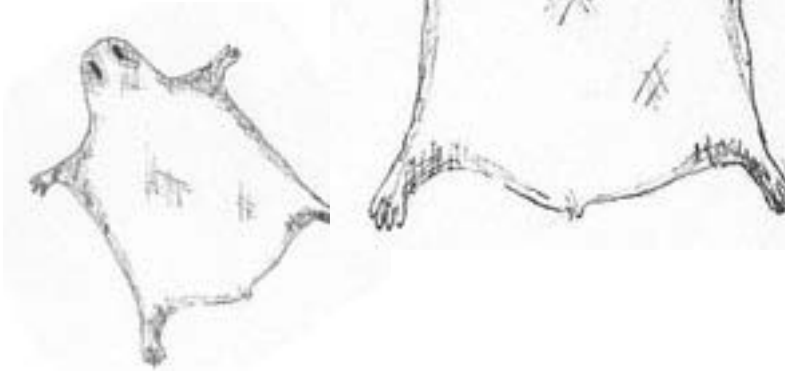
We left L'Arbre Croche. We paddled a long way south in Lake Michigan along the Lower Peninsula. We stopped when we reached the **mouth** of a small river. *(Today, a city named Ludington is at the mouth of this river.)*



We **landed** our canoes and left them near the shore of Lake Michigan. Then we walked about 15 miles along the river, away from Lake Michigan. We built a lodge and made our own fall camp. Here we found elk, deer, bear, raccoon, and beaver to hunt.

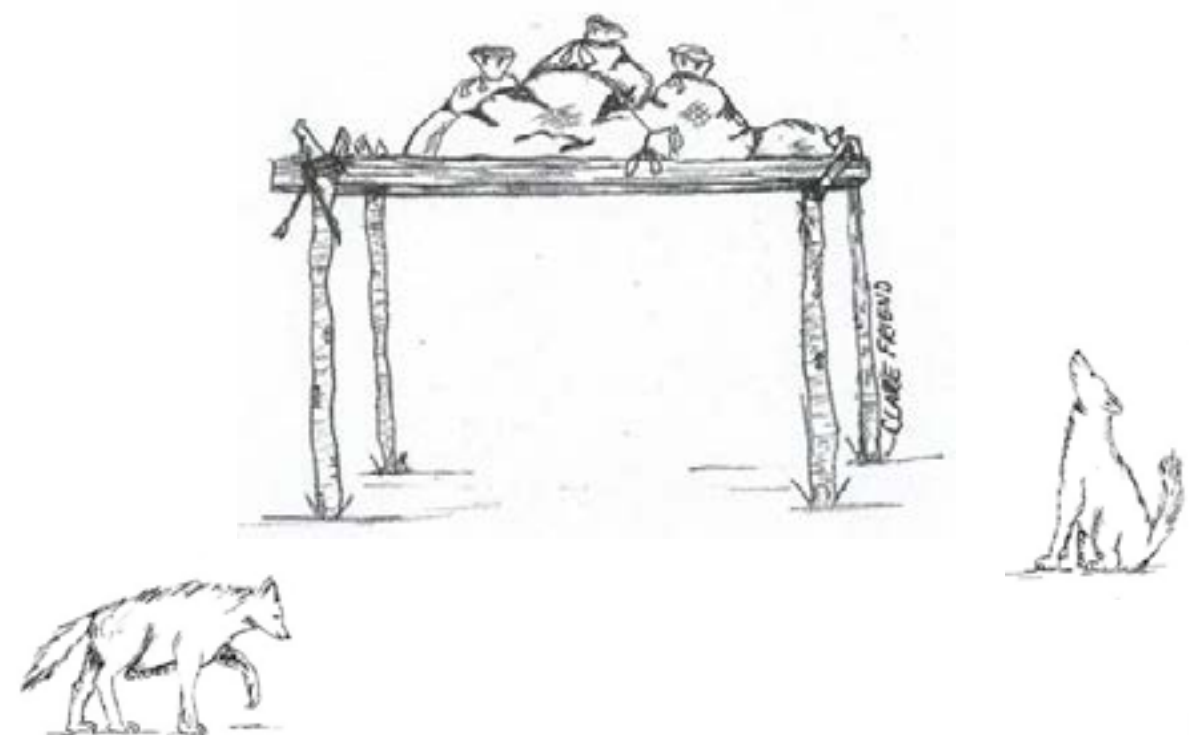
Discussion Question:

Why do you think the family moved away from the coast of Lake Michigan to make their camp?



Hunting was good at our **autumn** (fall) hunting camp. By December, we had a total of 100 beaver skins and 100 raccoon skins. We also had many pounds of dried **venison** (pieces of meat that we dried so we could eat them later).

We stored most of these furs and meat above the ground on top of a **scaffold**. Now the wolves could not reach them. Next, we would travel to the family's winter hunting camp. We would come back for the furs and dried meat in the spring.



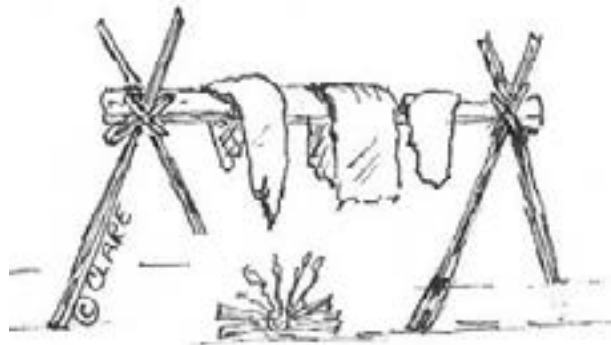


Winter Time

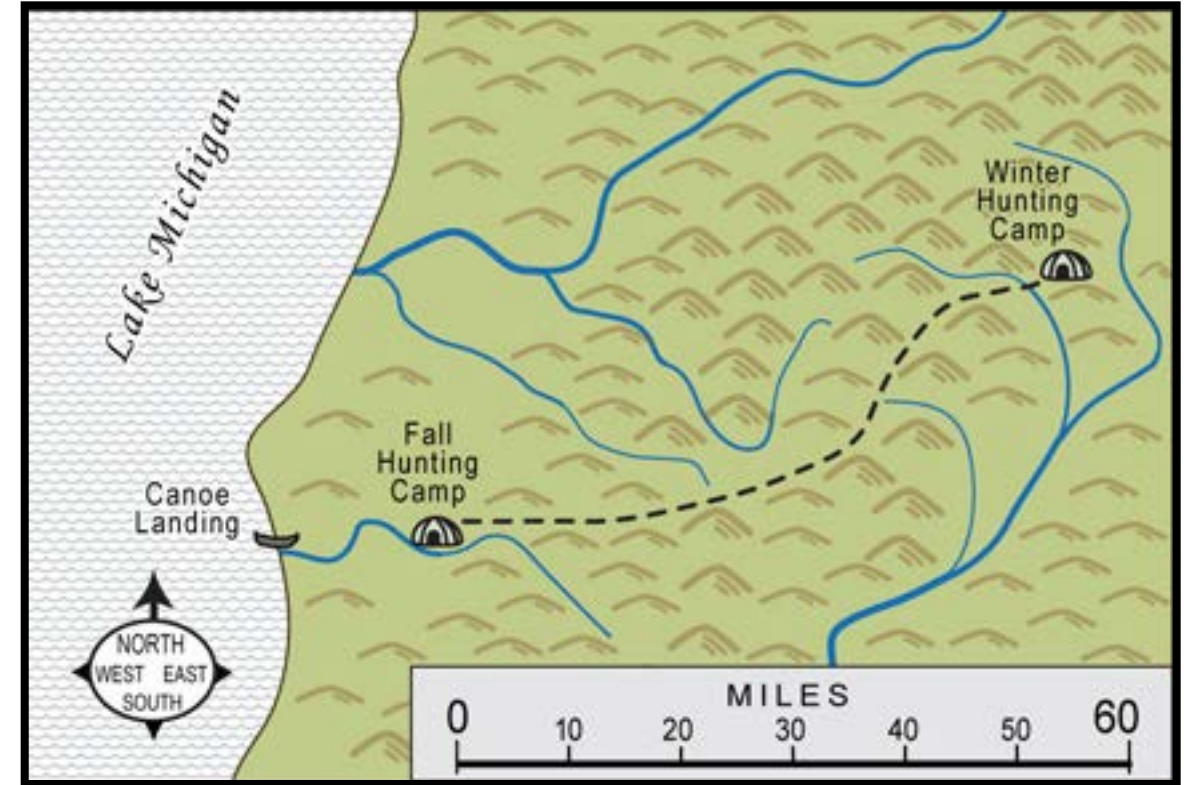
On December 21 we moved away from the fall hunting camp to find more animals to hunt. We would have to walk about 60 miles to reach our winter camp in the pine forest. We had to carry all our supplies in bundles on our back. I was lucky because my bundle was lighter than the others. The women carried the heaviest ones. We walked about 20 miles the first day.



Along the way, Wawatam and his son killed an elk. It took two days to cut up and dry the elk meat over the camp fire. Then we continued our journey.



When we reached our family winter camp, the women built a lodge. We would stay at our winter camp from late December until March. There was plenty of game to hunt at our new camp.



Which two directions did they travel when they walked from their fall camp to the winter camp? (Use the compass rose.)

Why did the family need to have a winter camp that was in a different place than the fall camp?

Discussion Question:

What might be some dangers when you live in the woods in the winter?





The Bear

In January, I found a huge pine tree that had many scratch marks. I knew that a big bear had made the scratches when it climbed up this tree. The bear was living in the higher branches of the tree.



The family wanted to hunt the bear because they could eat its meat and fat when they had little other food. We all gathered around the tree. It took two days to chop the tree down with our small axes. On the second day the huge tree finally fell.

It was quiet for a few minutes.

Suddenly, a bear stood up and came toward us.

I shot the bear!

The family asked the bear to forgive us and thanked it for the food it provided.

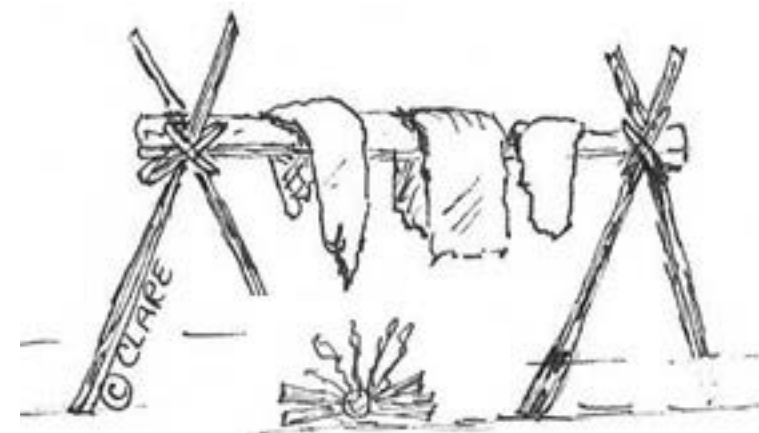
Adapted from Alexander's Diary:

"Begging a thousand pardons for taking away your life!"



The bear weighed more than 500 pounds. We carried it back to our camp. The next day we **honored** the bear by putting silver, tobacco and wampum on its head. Then we had a feast!

The most valuable part of that bear was the oil made from its fat. We had to heat the fat over a fire to melt it, and then we stored the oil in porcupine skin bags.



We dried some of the meat over the fire and stored it in the oil. The meat was still good to eat the next summer.

About how many classmates would it take to weigh as much as the bear?

Less than 3 About 5 -7 More than 8





Moving Again

By the end of February, it was time for the family to move back west toward Lake Michigan. We would return to the place of our autumn camp. We had so much to carry! We had blankets, household items, guns and tools. We also had furs, bear oil, about 4,000 pounds of dried venison, and a baby!



Moving was hard. On the first morning, we carried as much as we could away from camp. We walked until about 2:00 in the afternoon. We stopped to build a scaffold to hold our loads. Then we went back to the winter camp.

On the second morning, we brought more bundles to the scaffold and returned again to the winter camp to sleep. The next morning, we moved a third load to the stopping place. It took several days to carry everything from the winter camp to this first “stop”.



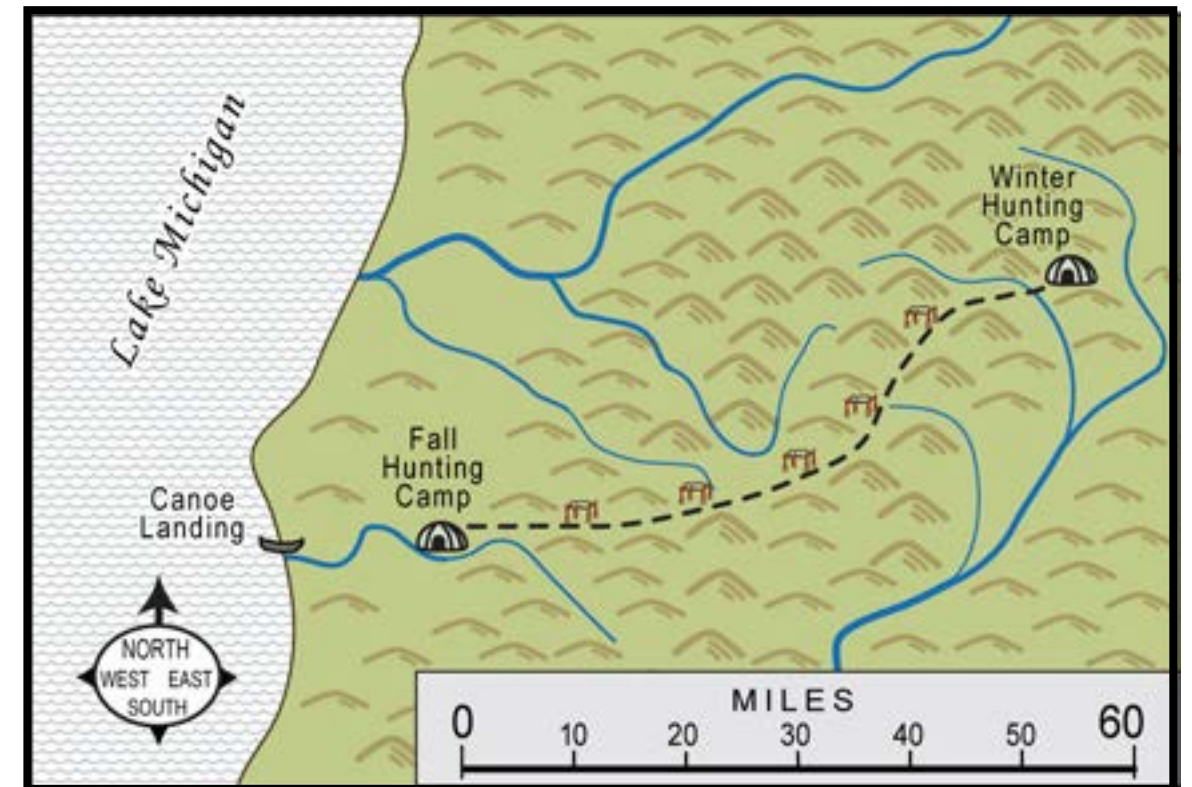
The footprints in the diagram represent the long walk done by a family member who carried loads to the new camp. The actual distance is a really long walk, so there would be many more footprints.

Why did they put bundles of dried meat on top of the scaffold?



After we carried all our heavy loads from the winter camp to our first stopping place, we built a new lodge. This was the first “stop” of the long walk from the family’s winter camp back to the fall camp. It took many “stops” to move all of our bundles from the winter hunting camp. At each stop we needed to build a scaffold and a new lodge.

We were happy to return to the fall camp with its many sugar maple trees. This now became our spring camp!



The scaffold symbols on the map show that we made many “stops” along our trip.

How far do you think you could walk carrying a 10-pound backpack?





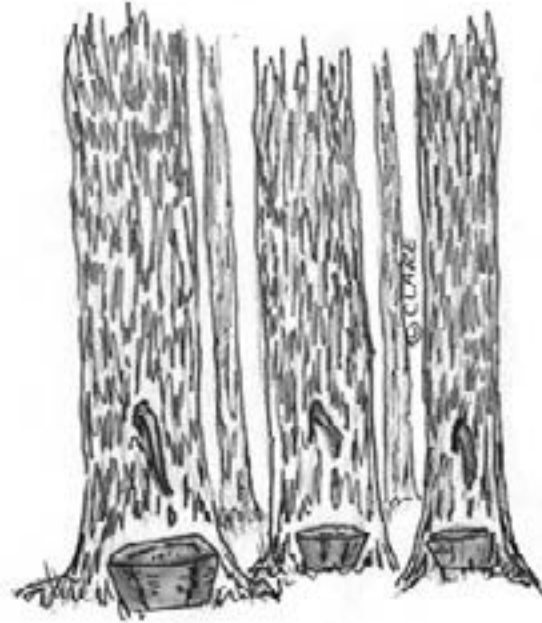
March! Sugaring Time!

Several families worked together at this springtime camp. Maple sugar was our main food during this time.



The men cut the wood for the fires, and hunted and fished.

The women gathered the sap...



...and made the maple sugar.

How did the women gather the sap for maple sugar?
(Read what Alexander wrote about this in his diary.)



Adapted from Alexander's Diary

Many sugar maple trees and white birch trees grew at the sugar camp. Both kinds of trees were important. The women first gathered strips of bark from white birch trees. From the birch bark, they made cups that would hold the sweet sap (juice) from maple trees. To get the sap, the women made small cuts into the maple trees and put a spout into each cut. They hung a bark cup under each spout, so the cup would catch the sap that flowed out of the cut.

The women watched for cups that were full of sap, and they emptied the cups into bigger buckets. They poured their buckets into big bags made out of moose-skin. The bags held the thin sap before it was cooked.

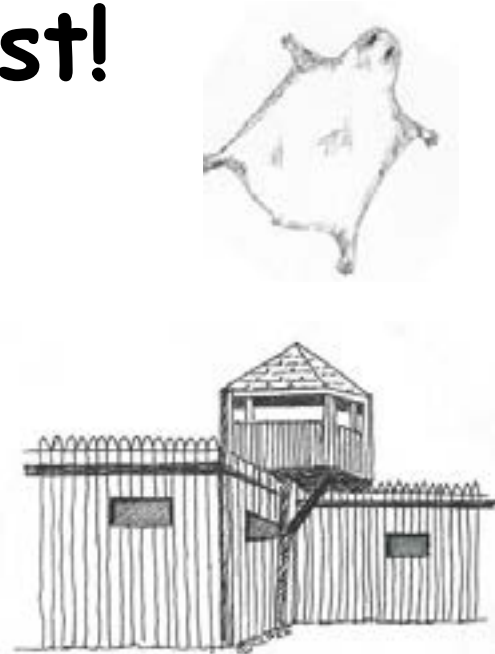
How did the women cook the sap? They used strong metal pots (boilers) hung over fires. A big pot could hold twenty gallons of sap. The fires made the sap boil slowly so the sweet juice turned into maple sugar. Fires kept sap boiling day and night.

While the women collected the sap, boiled it, and made the sugar, the men were busy cutting wood, making fires, and hunting and fishing.



Spring at last!

In late April we packed the canoes and traveled back to Fort Michilimackinac. We brought our heavy loads of furs and skins to the French traders at the fort. We used the furs and skins to pay for the supplies that we bought with a credit slip last fall. My share was 100 beaver skins, 60 raccoon skins, and six otter skins, worth \$160. I bought clothes, ammunition, and tobacco.



Friends came to warn me that I should leave the fort. Other Native Americans were coming who did not like Englishmen like me. They wanted to make me a prisoner again! I could not stay here with Wawatam, so I said goodbye to my Ojibwa family.

In early May I went north to Sault Ste. Marie where I would be safe.

I had lived with my Ojibwa family for a year. We had many adventures as we traveled to find food in summer, fall, winter, and spring.

Alexander Henry

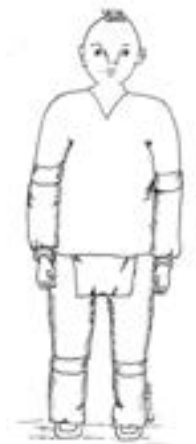


Glossary and Index

- autumn** - time of the year that comes after summer and before winter *pages 10, 13, 18*
- bushel** - a unit of measure; a bushel of corn weighs about 56 pounds *page 10*
- compass rose** - arrows on a map that point to north, south, east, west *pages 8, 15*
- credit slip** - a promise to pay for something that you take away now but will pay for at later time *pages 10, 22*
- felt** - a thick cloth or fabric made from animal hair *page 5*
- fur trader** - men who bought furs and sold metal tools and cloth to Native Americans in the 1700s near the Great Lakes *page 5*
- honored** - showed respect or gave praise to someone or something *page 17*
- landed** - moved from water to land or set down on the land *page 12*
- lodge** - a house made of branches and bark - built by Native Americans *pages 9, 12, 14, 19*
- maize** - corn plants that Native Americans raised for food *pages 10, 11*
- mouth** - the place where a river or stream flows into a lake or an ocean *page 12*
- sap** - a watery liquid that flows inside a plant or from cuts in trees *pages 20, 21*
- scaffold** - a wide platform above the ground held up on tall legs *pages 13, 18, 19*
- scale** - a line with marks that show distances on a map *pages 8, 11*
- spout** - tube that carries sap from the tree to the cup *page 21*
- sturgeon** - a large fish that Native Americans caught to use for food *page 9*
- venison** - the meat from a deer used as food *pages 13, 18*
- wampum** - small shell beads, sometimes put on necklaces, used for decoration or for money by Native Americans *pages 6, 7*

Places and People

Alexander Henry - an English fur trader who lived with Ojibwa from 1763-1764



Fort Michilimackinac - fort and trading post in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan in the 1700s *pages 8, 9, 10, 11, 22*

L'Arbre Croche - a Native American village near Lake Michigan in northern Michigan *pages 11, 12*

Ludington - a city on the shore of Lake Michigan at the mouth of a small river *page 12*

Ojibwa - a Native American group of the Anishinaabe peoples *pages 5, 6*

Ottawa - a Native American group of the Anishinaabe peoples *pages 11, 22*

Sault Ste. Marie - a place in northern Michigan near Canada, used by Native Americans for trading and fishing in the 1700s *page 22*

St. Martin Island - an island in northern Lake Huron where Native Americans lived in summer *pages 8, 9*

Wawatam - the head of an Ojibwa family that adopted Alexander Henry in the 1700s *pages 5, 6, 9, 14, 22*

This story is based on the writings of an English fur trader named Alexander Henry. In 1763 a group of Ojibwa attacked the British at Fort Michilimackinac, and they made Alexander Henry a prisoner. Fortunately, Alexander had an Ojibwa friend named Wawatam who persuaded the Ojibwa attackers to release Alexander Henry. He lived with Wawatam's family from June of 1763 to May of 1764.

We learned about Alexander Henry from a book in which he wrote about his life (Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories, Applewood Books facsimile of 1809 publication).

Our booklet turns a primary source written by an adult in the late 1700s into language readable by young students today.



"Alexander Henry The Elder." 2015. The Famous People website. May 8 2015, 02:33
[//www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/alexander-henry-3541.php](http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/alexander-henry-3541.php).
Read more at <http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/alexander-henry-3541.php#Qe6QOJymjv0qVcCa.99>

Additional sources recommended for further reading:

- Indian Culture and European Trade Goods by George Irving Quimby (University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).
- Massacre at Mackinac – 1783 edited by David A. Armour, (Mackinac Island State Park Commission, Mackinac Island, 1966).
- Museums:
 - Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, Mt. Pleasant, MI;
 - Michigan Historical Museum, Lansing, MI.
- Trade books:
 - Life in an Anishinabe Camp by Niki Walker, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2003;
 - Nations of the Western Great Lakes by Kathryn Smithyman and Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2003.

