



Picturesque America; or, the land we live in

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

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Mackinac.

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MACKINAC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. DOUGLAS WOODWARD.



Arched Rock.

TRAVELLING westward over the great lakes, we constantly encounter beginnings. The newness of the new world is conspicuous, pleasantly or obtrusively, according to our tastes, but conspicuous always. The cities on the shores are young and precocious, the villages are young and awkward, and the lumber-sta-

tions are young and green with the freshly-cut verdure of the forest. The universal boast on the fresh-water seas is, "See how young we are!"

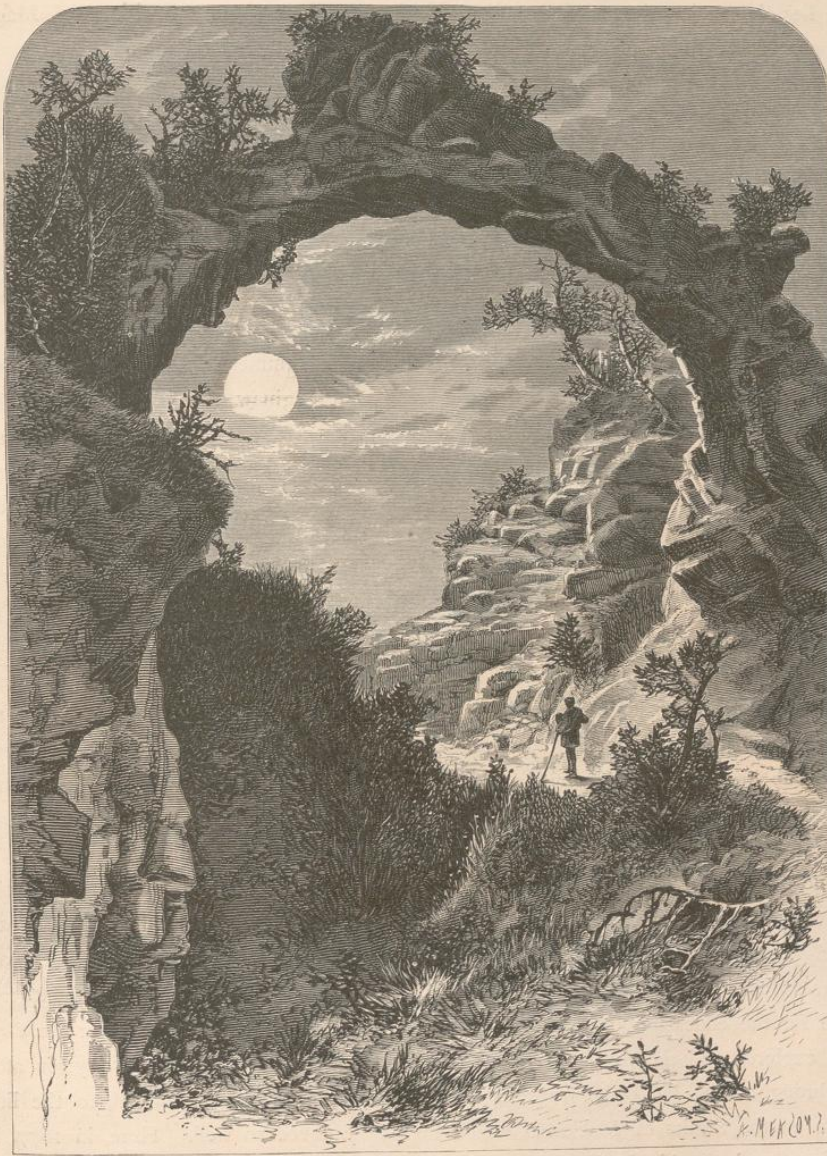
You enter a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants. "Twenty years ago, sir, this was an unbroken wilderness," observes the citizen, as he takes you through the busy streets in his luxurious carriage. The steamer stops at a thriving town of ten thousand people. "Five years ago there wasn't so much as a shanty here," says the hotel-keeper, with a flourishing wave of his hand toward the clustering houses and his four-story frame caravansary, decked out in shining green and white. Early, some bright morning, a landing is made at a wood-station; a long wharf, a group of unpainted



View of Fort and Town.

houses, a store, and several saw-mills, compose a promising settlement. "Six months ago, mister, there war'n't even a chip on this yer spot," says a bearded giant, sitting on a wood-pile, watching the passengers as they come ashore.

Coming from the east and striking the lakes at Buffalo, the elderly traveller begins to breathe this juvenile atmosphere of the fresh water; and, as he advances westward, he is obliged to abandon, one by one, his cherished beliefs and interests. History there is none, relics there are none, and the oldest inhabitant seems to him but a boy. At first he wonders and admires, with a strange, new scorn for the quiet ocean-village where his home is fixed, but gradually he grows weary of the hurry, weary of the paint, weary of unfinished cities and just-begun villages, weary of ambitious words and daring hopes.



Arched Rock by Moonlight.

weary, in short, of the soaring American eagle. In this mood, after gloomily surveying Duncan and Sheboygan, on the Michigan shore, the elderly traveller, still weary with the new, is suddenly brought face to face with the old; for in the straits between Lakes Huron and Michigan, round the corner of Bois-Blanc and past the shoals of Round

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Point, lies the ancient home of the Giant Fairies, the little picturesque island of Mackinac, venerable with the memories of more than two centuries.

There is nothing young about Mackinac, nothing new. The village, at the foot of the cliff, is decayed and antiquated; the fort, on the height above, is white and crumbling with age; the very flag is tattered; and, once beyond this fringe of habitations around the port, there is no trace of the white man on the island save one farm-house of the last century, and a ruin on the western shore. There is no commercial activity at Mackinac; the business life of the village died out with the fur-trade; and so different is its aspect from that of the other lake-towns, no matter how small, that the traveller feels as though he was walking through the streets of a New-World Pompeii.

There is no excitement in Mackinac, no news. In summer, if Huron is willing, the Sarnia boats bring the mails three times a week; but Saginaw Bay is often surly; blustering head-winds lie in wait behind Thunder-Bay Islands, and days pass without a letter or paper. In winter the mails are carried over the ice on dog-trains, travelling northward along the shores of Lake Huron, and striking across the straits—pictures of arctic life as real as any in the polar regions. But even this means of communication is necessarily precarious, and spy-glasses from the fort often sweep the horizon for weeks, searching in vain for the welcome black speck in the white distance. Thus isolated in the northern waters, the island does not enjoy that vivid interest in passing events which this age of steam and electricity has evoked; neither politics, epidemics, improvements, nor religion, disturb its lethargy. Religion has lain dormant where the first missionaries left it; the air is so pure that no one dies under the extreme limit of the term allotted to man; no improvements have been made in a hundred years; and, as to politics, if the islanders do not persist, like the Pennsylvania Dutchmen, in voting for General Jackson, it is simply because they have only got as far down the list as Madison.

The history of Mackinac (Mackinac, or Mackinaw, is an abbreviation of the full title of Michilimackinac, which, according to Lippincott's "Gazetteer," should be pronounced *Mish-ih-e-mak'e-naw*) may be divided into three periods—the explorer's, the military, and the fur-trading. The first period embraces the early voyages of Father Marquette; his college for the education of Indian youths, established on the straits in 1671; the death of the explorer, and the remarkable funeral procession of canoes, which, two years afterward, brought back his body, from its first burial-place on Lake Michigan, to the little mission on the Straits of Mackinac, which in life he loved so well. Here, in 1677, his grave was made by his Indian converts; its exact site was lost during the warfare that followed, but it was in the neighborhood of the little church whose foundation remains still visible, and here it is proposed to erect a monument to his memory.

In 1679 the daring explorer, Robert Cavalier de la Salle, sailed through the straits on his way to the Mississippi, in a vessel of sixty tons, called the Griffin, built by himself, on Lake Erie, during the previous spring. He stopped at old Mackinac, on the

main-land; and Hennepin, the historian of the expedition, describes the astonishment of the Indians on seeing the Griffin, the first vessel that passed through the beautiful straits.

In 1688 a French officer, Baron la Houtan, visited the straits, and in his journal



Chimney Rock.

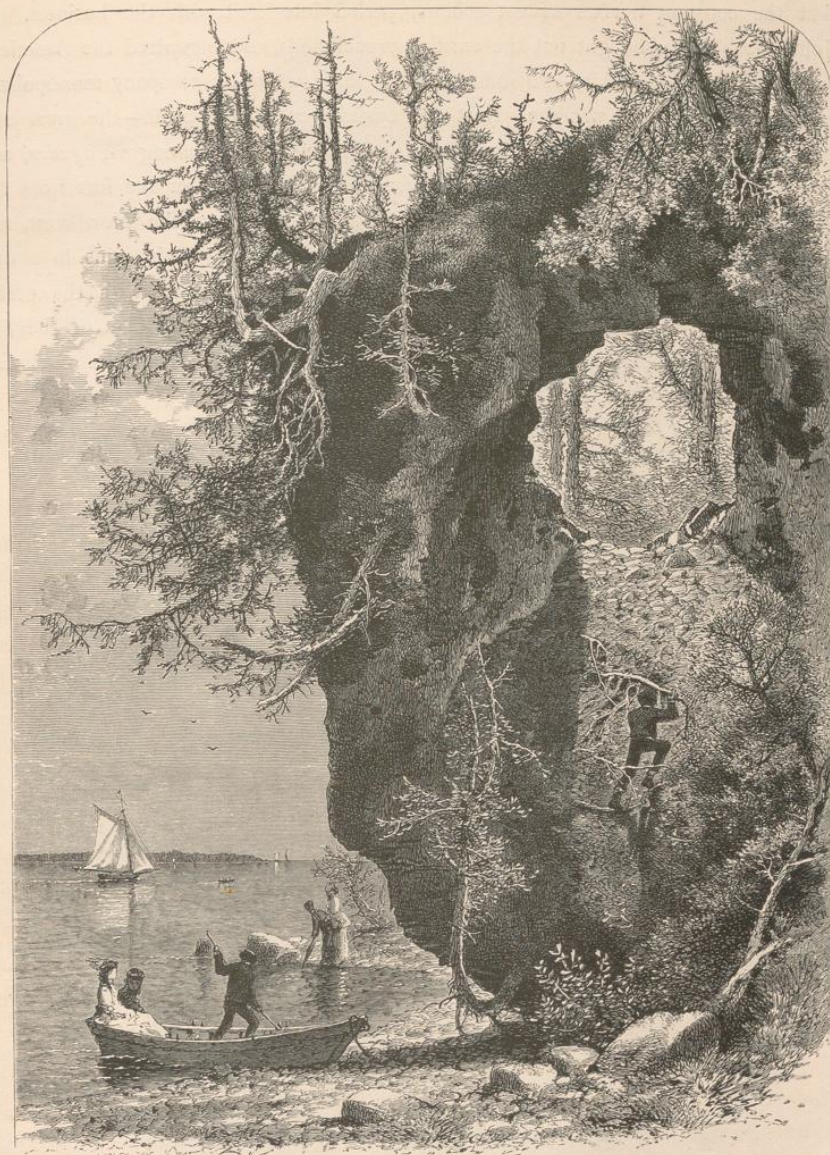
makes the first mention of the fur-trade: "The *courriers de bois* have a settlement here, this being the depot for the goods obtained from the south and west savages, for they cannot avoid passing this way when they go to the seats of the Illinese and the Oumamis, and to the river of Mississippi."

In 1695 the military period begins. At that date M. de la Motte Cadillac, who afterward founded the present city of Detroit, established a small fort on the straits. Then came contests and skirmishes, not unmingled with massacres (for the Indians were enlisted on both sides), and finally the post of Mackinac, together with all the French strongholds on the lakes, was surrendered to the English, in September, 1761.

In 1763 began the conspiracy of Pontiac, wonderful for the sagacity with which it was planned and the vigor with which it was executed. Pontiac, the most remarkable Indian of all the lake-tribes, lived on Pêché Island, near Lake St. Clair. He was a firm friend of the French, and, to aid their cause, he arranged a simultaneous attack upon all the English forts in the lake-country, nine out of twelve being taken by surprise and destroyed, and among them the little post on the Straits of Mackinac. For a year after the massacre no soldiers were seen in these regions; but, a treaty of peace having been made with the Indians, troops were again sent west to raise the English flag in its old position.

During the War for Independence the fort was established in its present site on Mackinac Island; and the stars and stripes, superseding the cross of St. George and the lilies of the Bourbons, waved for a time peacefully over the heights; but the War of 1812 began, and the small American garrison was surprised and captured by the British, under Captain Robarts, who, having landed at the point still known as the "British Landing," marched across the island to the gate of the fort and forced a surrender. After the victory of Commodore Perry, on Lake Erie, in 1813, it was determined to recapture Fort Mackinac from the British, and a little fleet was sent from Detroit for that purpose. After wandering in the persistent fogs of Lake Huron, the vessels reached the straits, and a brisk engagement began in the channel, between Round Island and Mackinac. At length the American commander decided to try a land attack, and forces were sent on shore, under command of Colonel Croghan and Major Holmes. They landed at the "British Landing," and had begun to cross the island when the British and Indians met them, and a desperate battle ensued in the clearing near the Dousman farm-house. The enemy had the advantage of position and numbers, and, aided by their innumerable Indian allies, they succeeded in defeating the gallant little band, who retreated to the "Landing," leaving a number killed on the field, among them Major Holmes. The American fleet cruised around the island for some time, but "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

As far back as 1671, Marquette had noticed and described the currents of air that disturb the navigation of the straits, in the following quaint terms: "The winds: for this is the central point between the three great lakes which surround it, and which seem incessantly tossing ball at each other. For no sooner has the wind ceased blowing from Lake Michigan, than Lake Huron hurls back the gale it has received; and Lake Superior, in its turn, sends forth its blasts from another quarter; and thus the game is con-



Fairy Arch.

stantly played from one to the other." The clumsy vessels could do nothing against the winds and waves; and not until the conclusion of peace, in 1814, was the American flag again hoisted over the Gibraltar of the lakes.

Points on the Straits of Mackinac began to be stations for the fur-trade as early as

1688, but the constant warfare of the military period interfered with the business. In 1809 John Jacob Astor bought out the existing associations, and organized the American Fur Company, with a capital of two millions. For forty years this company monopolized the fur-trade, and Mackinac was the gayest and busiest post in the chain—the great central mart. Here were the supply-stores for the outgoing and incoming *voyageurs*, and the warehouses for the goods brought from New York, as well as for the furs from the interior. From here started the *bateaux* on their long journey to the Northwest, and here, once or twice a year, came the returned *voyageurs*, spending their gains in a day, with the gay prodigality of their race, laughing, singing, and dancing with the pretty half-breed girls, and then away into the wilderness again. The old buildings of the Fur Company form a large portion of the present village of Mackinac. The warehouses are



Sugar-Loaf Rock—(East Side).



Sugar-Loaf Rock—(West Side).

for the most part, unused, although portions of some of them are occupied as stores. The present McLeod House, an hotel on the north street, was originally erected as a boarding-house for the company's clerks, in 1809. These were Mackinac's palmy days; her two little streets were crowded with people, and her warehouses filled with merchandise. All the traffic of the company centred here, and its demands necessitated the presence of men of energy and enterprise, some of the oldest and best business-men of the Eastern cities having served an apprenticeship in the little French village under the cliff. Here, also, were made the annual Indian payments, when the neighboring tribes assembled by thousands on the island to receive their stipend.

The natural scenery of Mackinac is charming. The geologist finds mysteries in the masses of calcareous rock dipping at unexpected angles; the antiquarian feasts his eyes

on the Druidical circles of ancient stones; the invalid sits on the cliff's edge, in the vivid sunshine, and breathes in the buoyant air with delight, or rides slowly over the old military roads, with the spicery of cedars and juniper alternating with the fresh forest-odors of young maples and beeches. The haunted birches abound, and on the crags grow the weird larches, beckoning with their long fingers—the most human tree of all. Bluebells, on their hair-like stems, swing from the rocks, fading at a touch, and in the deep woods



Lovers' Leap.

are the Indian pipes, but the ordinary wild-flowers are not to be found. Over toward the British Landing stand the Gothic spires of the blue-green spruces, and now and then an Indian trail crosses the road, worn deep by the feet of the red-men, when the Fairy Island was their favorite and sacred resort.

The Arch Rock, one of the curiosities of Mackinac, is a natural bridge, one hundred and forty-five feet high by less than three feet wide, spanning the chasm with airy grace. This arch has been excavated by the action of the weather on a projecting angle

of the limestone cliff. The beds forming the summit of the arch are cut off from direct connection with the main rock by a narrow gorge of no great depth. The portion supporting the arch on the north side, and the curve of the arch itself, are comparatively fragile, and cannot long resist the action of rains and frosts, which in this latitude, and on a rock thus constituted, produce great ravages every season. The arch is peculiarly



“Robinson's Folly.”

beautiful when silvered with the light of the moon, and hence on moonlight nights strangers on the island always visit it.

Fairy Arch is of similar formation to Arch Rock, and lifts from the sands with a grace and beauty that justify the name bestowed upon it.

The Sugar-Loaf is a conical rock, one hundred and thirty-four feet high, standing alone in hoary majesty in the midst of a grassy plain.

The Lovers' Leap, on the western shore, is two hundred feet high, rising from the lake like a rocky column, and separated from the adjoining bank by a deep chasm. The legend, as usual, is of an Indian squaw, who, standing on the rock, waiting and watching for the return of her lover from battle, saw the warriors bringing his dead body to the island, and in her grief threw herself into the lake. But, as a bright spirit once observed, "One gets tired of thinking of all the girls who have leaped!" and enthusiasm flags over a heroine whose name is Me-che-ne-mock-e-nung-o-ne-qua!

The cliff called "Robinson's Folly" has its legend also. This time it was a young officer who went over; indeed, there may have been half a dozen of them, for the Folly was a summer-house where cigars and wine helped to pass away the long summer days, and when at last the rock crumbled and carried them over, Robinson's folly was complete, and is still remembered, although it was finished more than a hundred years ago.

Old Fort Holmes, on the highest point of the island, was built by the British in 1812. It was then named Fort George, but, after the Americans took possession of Mackinac, it was renamed after the gallant Major Holmes, who was killed in the battle on Dousman's farm the preceding year. The ruins are still to be seen, and the surveyor's station on the summit is a favorite resort for summer visitors, as the view of the straits is superb.

The present Fort Mackinac was built by the British about a century ago. It stands on the cliff overlooking the village, and its stone-walls and block-houses present a bold front to the traveller wearied with the peaceful, level shores of the fresh-water seas. This ancient little fort has a long list of honored names among its records—veteran names of the War of 1812, well-known names of the Mexican contest, and loved, lamented names of the War for the Union. It has always been a favorite station among the Western posts, and many soldiers have looked back with loving regret as the boat carried them away from the beautiful island.

In 1823 a Protestant mission-school for Indian children was built upon the beautiful slope at the eastern end of Mackinac village. This was one of the most, if not the most, flourishing of the Indian schools in the United States, containing, at one time, two hundred scholars, Indian boys and girls gathered from all the lake-country as far west as the Red River of the North. The idea of the school originated with the Rev. Dr. Morse, father of the inventor of the telegraph, who, happening to visit the island in 1820, noticed the lawless life of the fur-traders and *voyageurs*, and the bad effect upon the half-civilized Indians. Returning to his Eastern home, he described what he had seen; public interest was awakened, money liberally contributed, and a school and church built under the care of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. There are still persons living in the Eastern States who remember the sanguine expectations regarding this school. The beautiful island was to be evangelized, Indian children were to be Christianized, educated, and sent back to their

homes, each one a missionary bringing good tidings to the people who sat in great darkness. The *voyageurs* and traders also were to be gathered into the fold, and their half-forgotten religion revived and trained into a purer and more vigorous growth. The school prospered for fifteen years. It was a favorite mission at the East, especially in New England, and zealous teachers gave their best efforts for its success. The mission was continued until the extinction of the fur-trade, the removal of the agency, and the gradual diminution of the Indians in the vicinity reduced its opportunities for good.

The island of Mackinac was a sacred spot to the Indians of the lakes. They believed it to be the home of the giant fairies, and never passed its shores without stopping to offer tribute to the powerful genii who guarded the straits. Even now there is a vague belief among the remnants of the tribes that these mystic beings still reside under the island, and sometimes sally forth by night from the hill below the fort.

It is not often that we can obtain a specimen of the original poetry of the Indian race before intercourse with the white man had corrupted its simplicity. Occasionally we find a fragment. Some years ago an aged Indian chieftain left his Mackinac home to visit some of his tribe in the Lake-Superior country, and, as he sat upon the deck of the steamer in the clear twilight and watched the outlines of the fairy island growing faint in the distance, the old man's heart broke forth in the following apostrophe, which a listener, struck by its beauty, translated and transcribed on the spot:

"Michilimackinac, isle of the clear, deep-water lake! how soothing it is, from amidst the smoke of my *opawgun*, to trace thy blue outlines in the distance, and to call from memory the traditions and legends of thy sacred character! How holy wast thou in the eyes of our Indian seers! How pleasant to think of the time when our fathers could see the stillness which the great Manitou shed on thy waters, and hear at evening the sound of the giant fairies, as with rapid step and giddy whirl they danced upon thy limestone battlements! Nothing then disturbed them save the chipping of birds and the rustling of the silver-barked birch. Michilimackinac, isle of the deep lake, farewell!"



Indian Hut.