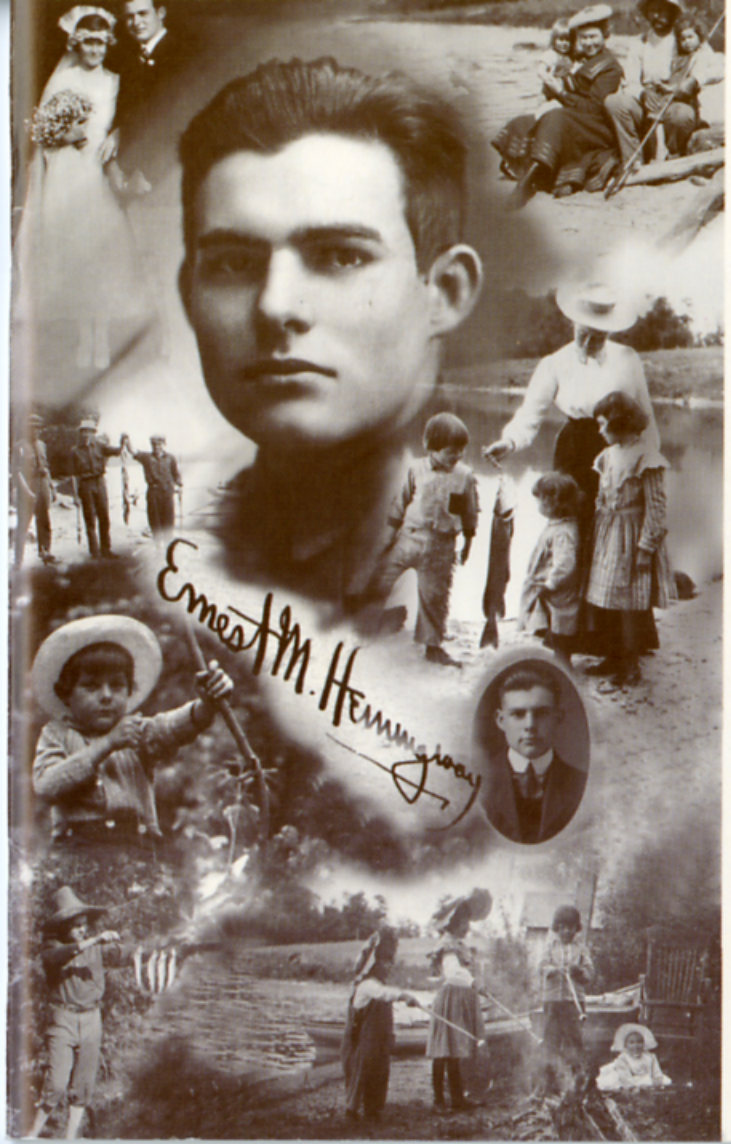


Hemingway in Michigan

Michigan in Hemingway

An exhibit held in the

Clarke Historical Library

October 7th through December 15th
2003

Hemingway in Michigan
Michigan in Hemingway

An Exhibition in the
Francis and Mary Lois Molson
Exhibit Gallery
of the
Clarke Historical Library

October 7 through December 15, 2003

Clarke Historical Library
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, Michigan
Copyright ©2003



The Hemingway family on the beach at Walloon Lake, July 1915

HEMINGWAY IN MICHIGAN

An essay by
Frederic Svoboda

Introduction

In important ways, Ernest Hemingway grew up in Michigan in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although his later life took him into the great world far from "Windemere," his parents' summer cottage on Walloon Lake, significant parts of his best writing never really left Michigan behind. We see this in the subject matter of many of his greatest short stories, and also in characteristic interests that derived from his Michigan experiences. As he wrote, Hemingway transformed his experiences on Walloon Lake and nearby into stories not precisely identical to the actual life he lived there. But what emerged in words evokes the spirit of northern Michigan then and now: its land, its lakes, its fish and wildlife, and particularly its people.

During most of the year, the boy who would become a Nobel Laureate author and one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century, lived in upscale, earnest Oak Park, Illinois. The village of Oak Park had been planted on the prairie conveniently near—yet not a part of—what Carl Sandburg would call "the city of broad shoulders, hog butcher to the nation," Chicago. Oak Park began to grow after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and was still growing at Hemingway's birth on July 21, 1899. The village was intended by those who built it as a refuge from the hurly-burly of city life, and while it offered

him a place from which to launch himself—including a close family life, excellent education, and exposure to the finest of early-twentieth-century culture—it did not engage Hemingway as subject matter. An apocryphal and probably unfair quotation has him calling Oak Park a village of broad lawns and narrow minds, and he wrote almost nothing about it.

But Ernest Hemingway also grew up in Michigan and immortalized it, for northern Michigan offered him a more essential, sensuous world than did Oak Park. It was a place in which he could test civilized values against the great north woods, or at least what remained of them after logging, tourism, and other forms of more or less exploitative development. Each year Hemingway came to Michigan, even just a few weeks after his birth. He returned, save for the year he was in Italy with the Red Cross ambulance corps during the First World War, until his twenty-second year. He grew to understand the streams and forest. His father, Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, an enthusiastic amateur naturalist, taught him to hunt and fish—and to observe nature with care. Clarence was not only an objective, scientifically trained medical doctor with particular expertise in obstetrics, but also he was the nurturing member of the family, famous for his pies and for his emotional ups and downs. His mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, was the artist—a skilled amateur painter in later years but a professional singer and highly paid teacher of voice during Hemingway's boyhood. If rural Michigan became a sort of a paradise to the outdoorsman doctor and his son, it was a purgatory to Grace, who felt herself to be stranded with children at Windemere, cut off from culture—and sufficient household help. (In 1919 she would use her father's legacy to build a room of her own at Grace Cottage, a mile's row across Walloon Lake from Windemere.) The tensions between the two parents' worlds and world views show clearly in several



A view of Windemere, the Hemingway cottage



Petoskey in Ernest Hemingway's era

of Hemingway's stories, perhaps most notably in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," in which Grace is fictionally transmuted into a hypochondriac Christian Scientist hiding from the world outside in a darkened bedroom while the fictionalized doctor deals with human duplicity—in which she refuses to believe. Tellingly, at the end of the story the protagonist, little Nick Adams, chooses to leave the sheltering cottage and go with his father into the woods in search of rare fauna, black squirrels. Nick Adams is the most nearly autobiographical of Hemingway's protagonists, and like Hemingway himself he sided with his father. The artistic debt to Grace Hall Hemingway was mostly unacknowledged by Hemingway, but her example of artistic expression probably was equally as important to his fiction as was the careful observation he learned from Dr. Hemingway. Aside from visits to Walloon Lake, Hemingway spent time nearby in civilized Petoskey and even more time in rustic Horton Bay. To travelers to Windemere, Petoskey was a transportation hub of railroads and Lake Michigan steamer connections. An easy day's excursion from Windemere via steam launch to Walloon Village and commuter train on from there, both running on regular schedules, Petoskey also offered shopping, restaurants, and all the amenities one would expect in a community of upscale resort hotels.

Horton Bay was a little harder to get to. Once Ernest was considered old enough to set out on his own, traveling to Horton Bay required a row across Walloon Lake followed by a hike along an old logging access. But it too was civilized. Horton Bay was no longer a village of lumbermen, but a small-scale resort on the shore of Lake Charlevoix that was built around a general store that dated from the era of lumbering (and that still operates today), the now-vanished church next door in which Hemingway was married in 1921, and an also vanished blacksmith shop that would figure in one of Hemingway's



Images of cottages in Horton Bay

more risqué north-country stories, "Up in Michigan." Horton Bay was home to Hemingway family friends who sometimes provided Ernest with refuge from Windemere as the pressures of family life and maturation built up—and who later helped host his wedding reception at "Shangri-La" and "Pinehurst," modest cottages that still stand today.

And Hemingway also ventured farther away from Windemere. He rode the trains as far as Seney, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and sometimes hiked along the railroad tracks. He observed the summer people and old settlers, the sportsmen and Native Americans and loggers, storing away memories of their appearance, mannerisms, and language.

Northern Michigan was deeply ingrained in Hemingway. He would leave Michigan in 1921, never to return for more than a day or two. But wherever he traveled, Michigan was not far from his thoughts. In the mid-1930s Hemingway himself explained why Michigan stayed with him and how he built on his Michigan experiences:

> *Write about what you know and write truly and tell them where they can place it . . . all good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened . . . the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was.*
>
> *Esquire*
> December 1934

All these were things he knew well about Michigan.

The good and the bad were hard to judge, sometimes, and much of Hemingway's Michigan fiction would be concerned with shades of meaning, the ambiguities of life in a world that seemed steadily to become more complicated. This modern viewpoint would set him against his parents, whose Victorian values were shocked by the direct treatment of life's less savory elements, as in "Up in Michigan," or "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." In the latter story a Native-American lumberjack picks a quarrel with Dr. Adams to avoid working out a debt for professional services rendered, claiming the drift logs he is to saw into firewood actually belong to a lumber company. Rather than risk a beating at the hands of the woodsman, the doctor sensibly backs down, even though he finds the confrontation intensely disturbing. The direct resolution of conflict through action as simple good confronts simple evil might make sense in melodramatic works of literature, but Hemingway went far beyond such simplistic formulations.

The ecstasy might be that of Nick Adams's first sexual longings and experiences, recorded in stories such as "Ten Indians," and "Fathers and Sons," and set against the sometimes compassionate, sometimes uncomprehending, reactions of Nick's straitlaced father. (In the latter story, one of Hemingway's greatest, a middle-aged Nick Adams comes to understand his father's strengths and weaknesses—and how the two of them could not communicate effectively. Then at the story's end, in a great irony, Nick similarly finds himself unable to tell his own son much of what he himself has just realized.)

The remorse and sorrow might be that of "The End of Something", set at an imaginatively recreated Horton Bay, where Nick Adams breaks up with his girlfriend, Marjorie. The end of the romantic relationship is paralleled by the end of the town as a center for lumbering,. Horton Bay's sawmill is loaded on a



Family lamp in Windemere

schooner that sails away down Lake Charlevoix, leaving an emptiness that doesn't quite reflect the reality of the place—but that does reflect the emotional emptiness that Nick Adams feels after the breakup. (The fictional Marjorie was probably inspired by Marjorie Bump of Petoskey, daughter of the hardware dealer who had provided nails and doorknobs for Windemere. For years some critics identified the character as a cheap waitress, though in fact the fictionalized version presented in the story shows that she has greater strength of character than Nick. By 1991 H. R. Stoneback definitively put paid to this misreading, establishing the story as a "delicate and enduring portrait of a Marge who possessed great dignity, discipline, poise, and a serene lyrical loveliness" [*Up in Michigan Perspectives*].)

The "how the weather was" might particularly evoke the setting of "The Three Day Blow," companion story to "The End of Something," another Horton Bay story. In it the young Nick Adams and his rather immature friend Bill sit in a snug cabin by the warmth of the fireplace and talk over the breakup with Marjorie. They are drinking and become ever drunker and drunker. The two young men spend much of their time avoiding the real emotional heart of the story by concentrating on the World Series (and baseball in general), popular fiction, and the ethics of drinking more than on Nick's failed romance. They ignore what should be the main point of their conversation, much as they ignore the end-of-summer storm that rages outside, yet the reader does not ignore it "How the weather was" might also recall the spring thaw of the comic novella, *Torrents of Spring*, in which warm Chinook winds evoke emotional anarchy in an odd assembly of settlers and Native Americans, none of whom is quite what he or she at first seems to be.

In 1953 Hemingway added to an explanation of his strengths as a writer in a letter to his friend, the distinguished art critic Bernard Berensen:



Windemere fireplace in Ernest Hemingway era

I cannot write beautifully, but I can write with great accuracy . . . and the accuracy makes a sort of beauty. . . . I know how to make country so that you, when you wish, can walk into it.

Ernest Hemingway:
Selected Letters 1917-1961

Hemingway knew Michigan and he wrote about it in such a way that a reader feels that he or she is walking into the state, whether the reader knows the landscape well or visits it only via the author's descriptions. Hemingway's lasting works about Michigan, however—about the people, the places, and the weather—do not express the literal truth of a journalist (although he was a journalist early in his career). Rather, Hemingway the artist often reconstructed reality to meet his artistic and personal needs—and to express the essences of human experience. Sometimes the reconstruction caused others pain and discomfort. The result, if not factual history, was nevertheless a Michigan portrait that may remain hauntingly familiar to us. Today, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, we can still recognize what happens among people living in small Upper Michigan communities and what people still feel when they escape big cities to go "up north."



A canoe on a Michigan lake

Walking through the Landscape and Looking at the Water

Michigan's auto industry grew up in the early decades of the twentieth century in a kind of parallel fashion with the growth of young Ernie Hemingway. Both were born just before the turn of the century and came to maturity at similar times. Residents tend to think of Michigan as the "World's Motor Capital," the tagline recently used on a license plate commemorating the centennial of the industry. But before Michigan became a world center for automotive development it was marked by many other forms of transportation: the canoes of colonial-era Indians and fur traders; the sailing ships that linked east to west via the Great Lakes route through the Straits of Mackinac; the sturdy main rail lines that ran across the state (linked to ingenious logging branch lines that snaked through the woods, sometimes running on wooden rails); the lake freighters that hauled iron ore to Detroit and Chicago; the luxury steamers that hauled tourists in the opposite direction; and any number of other steam- and sail- and horse-powered conveyances that made up the web of turn-of-the-century transportation. Only in 1917 would the Hemingways finally abandon horse and steam power to venture from Oak Park to Walloon Lake via a Model T Ford touring car.

But the family's three-day motor adventure of boarding houses, blowouts, and leaking oil did not become a subject for fictionalization by Hemingway, however suitable it might seem to us. No more than progressive Oak Park appears in his fiction does modern, up-to-date transportation appear at the center of his Michigan stories. Instead, Hemingway's Michigan short stories tend to happen at the pace of a heavy,



A contemporary view of a rail line near Mancelona, Michigan



Another view of a rail line near Mancelona

horse-drawn wagon laboring up a steep grade, as in "Ten Indians," or at the speed of a rowboat making its way across a still lake, as in "Indian Camp," or "The End of Something." Even more often, as in "The Battler," or "Big Two-Hearted River," the story only really begins once Nick Adams gets off of a train and walks into an older, more essential Michigan. The stories take place at the speed of a walking human, and they are more evocative because of it:

> *He started up the track. It was well ballasted and made easy walking, sand and gravel packed between the ties, solid walkin . . . . He stepped along the track, walking so he kept on the ballast between the ties, the swamp ghostly in the rising mist.*
>
> "The Battler"

The ghostly swamp is made to seem more threatening to Nick and to the reader than the real physical danger of the story's beginning, in which Nick Adams is riding illegally on a freight train and is knocked off the top of a boxcar by a seemingly friendly, then treacherous, brakeman. Nick survives what could have been a deadly fall with only a few cuts and bruises—and a badly bruised ego. "What a lousy kid thing to have done," he thinks about his too-trusting reaction. "They would never suck him in that way again."

Then he starts walking toward the next town along the rail line, the fortuitously named Mancelona. Nick's psychic journey in almost all of the stories in which he appears is through experience toward adulthood, he is heading toward manhood, but inding it difficult to get there. The "solid walking" of the roadbed is reassuring



Ernest Hemingway's high school graduation photograph

to him, the swamp's ambiguous rising mists at the end of the day, much less so.

Nick does not like ambiguity, though by the time Hemingway was writing this story, after his experiences during the First World War, he knew very well that ambiguity was the essence of modern experience. Nick walks the seeming wilderness between Kalkaska and Mancelona, "trying to get somewhere." The Michigan woods apparently are not "somewhere," at least in the view of a boy in his late teens who is not wholly comfortable to be alone and on his own with night coming on.

To achieve the effect of Nick's isolation in a threatening, darkening wilderness, some things disappear in the composition of the story, and others are added. The real elements of setting that disappear include several flag stop stations Nick would have had to pass through on the actual Grand Rapids and Indiana line. These disappear, as do the roads he would have crossed, although a look at local maps of the time clearly show that they existed. These signs of civilization are removed in service of the mood of isolation and the wilderness setting that Hemingway created for Nick and the reader.

What is added to the actual landscape is the swamp through which Nick walks on the reassuringly solid rail embankment. On the actual rail line from Kalkaska to Mancelona, which still exists, there is one spot at which the railway runs over a small valley on an embankment that is perhaps a quarter-mile long. The embankment is pierced by a culvert but still serves to dam the Rapid River into a little swampy pond extending a few hundred feet upstream. Hemingway had fished the river in the mid-1910s, and might have seen the swamp then. He also might have seen it from the window of his rail car as he rode—not walked—north. (We have the record of a diary to tell us how he traveled.) But there are no miles of swamp at the supposed location in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Instead, these are

created in his imagination, probably transplanted from the Upper Peninsula near Seney (site of "Big Two-Hearted River"), which is where a rail line does run for miles through swampy terrain. Perhaps they also were suggested by the rising mists of Rugg Pond on the Rapid River, near which he once camped in the rain. But they really come from his imagination at work, making a Michigan that will suit his story.

Finally Nick reaches a hobo camp near the outskirts of Mancelona, and there he repeats the pattern he began atop the freight car: he goes toward human contact as represented by the welcoming light of a camp fire, and again finds human connection turning not into safety, but danger. He meets Ad Francis, a former champion boxer now reduced to riding the rails with an African-American companion identified only as Bugs. In early-twentieth-century slang, to be bugs or buggy is to be crazy, but as often is the case in Hemingway, all is not what it seems. The still naïve Nick sees Bugs in stereotyped terms, as a servant at best, despite the man's courteous welcome. Only when the ex-boxer turns aggressive and Bugs saves Nick from him does the young man begin to see that Bugs is the man in control of the situation. Nick walks away from the hobo jungle in a confused daze, having been sucked in again. He still is not quite to Mancelona or manhood, and finds with apparent surprise that he is holding a fried egg sandwich given him by the black man.

One other "thing" is left out of the story—and of others such as "Big Two-Hearted River"—the companions who shared Hemingway's actual explorations of Michigan beyond the Petoskey/Walloon Lake/Horton Bay area:

[When in high school] Ernest had walked up to Walloon Lake [twice] after taking the boat across from Chicago to the lower part of Michigan. Once Louis Clarahan went with him, and the other time, as I recall, Harold Sampson made the long hike—over three hundred miles—with him. The boys camped along the way, sleeping in pup tents, cooking their own meals, swimming or fishing as they pleased.

Marcelline Hemingway Sanford
At the Hemingways

During the June 1916 trip with Louis Clarahan, for which Hemingway's diary account still exists, Ernest and Louis had parted in Kalkaska, with Clarahan going back to Oak Park and Ernest continuing on by rail via Petoskey to the cottage on Walloon Lake. The loneliness of Nick Adams on the rail bed just north of Kalkaska likely derived from Hemingway's memory of that solo journey, which included an overnight stay, though for Hemingway it took place not in a hobo jungle near Mancelona but in a single room at Petoskey's very elegant Perry Hotel, which is still in business today. As with civilized Oak Park, the very refined hotel never appeared in his work. In fiction the journey was slowed and made more immediately involving by Hemingway's transforming it into a lonely hike through a darkening wilderness rather than a civilized train ride through a countryside of mixed, second-growth woodland and small farms.

"Ten Indians" also happens at a walking pace. In this story the pace is that of a wagon in which Nick is returning from Fourth of July celebrations in Petoskey along with friends, the Garner family (probably



Petoskey, 1906

modeled on the Bacons, whose farm was near the Hemingway cottage). As was the case in "The Battler," Nick sees civilization as represented by light, here not a campfire but the lights of two northern resort communities. Here the movement is away from these centers of civilization and into the Michigan night, with home as the destination:

> *The road turned off from the main highway and went up into the hills. It was hard pulling for the horses and the boys got down and walked. The road was sandy. Nick looked back from the top of the hill by the schoolhouse. He saw the lights of Petoskey and, off across Little Traverse Bay, the lights of Harbor Springs.*
>
> "Ten Indians"

In this story maturity is again a theme, particularly sexual and emotional maturity. Nine of the Indians of the title are found drunk beside the road; indeed, one has to be moved out of the road by Joe Garner. Independence Day is a celebration of ambiguous meanings for Native Americans, and early-twentieth-century Anglo-American civilization might indeed threaten to run them down. The tenth Indian is Prudence Mitchell, with whom Nick is in love.

Again, connection to others proves somewhat difficult for Nick. In this story the slow pace of the ride leads to conversation on whatever comes to hand. Here it is the Indians who have come to hand, and the tone of the conversation sounds racist to twenty-first century ears. Mrs. Garner merely finds herself musingly repeating, "Them Indians."



Windemere Cottage

Clearly a kind person, she seems not to be able to connect to their experience of the Fourth, which is not surprising given her place in time. The Garner boys are less reticent. They seem jealous of Nick's romance and so comment on the smell of Indians in general and, by implication, Prudence in particular, and are reproved for it by Mrs. Garner. Nick's happiness is dented by their comments and perhaps even more so by the following comments that Mr. and Mrs. Garner make to each other. They share what is apparently a mature and happy sexual relationship, and their remarks about this relationship, made in undertones, that are not repeated or loud enough for the boys to hear. The psychic distance between their adult relationship and Nick's teenage dreams and disillusionments is considerable. Still, Nick is happy over all.

As the story continues, the wagon reaches the Garner farm. Nick leaves the Garners and walks barefoot through the woods to the lakeside cabin, which was obviously modeled on Windemere. He has left his shoes behind. His father, who is up late, provides Nick with a piece of pie, a sympathetic ear, and the information that he saw Prudence in the woods in a passionate encounter with another young man. Nick's heart is broken, or so he thinks to himself as he goes unhappily up to bed. But in the morning in what may be an echo of the turbulent aftermath of a breakup in "The Three Day Blow," the wind is up and waves are blowing onto shore, "and he was awake a long time before he remembered that his heart was broken." On the wild lakeshore, Nick finds a kind of peace.

Hemingway was always alive to the effects of the beauty of place and particularly the beauty of water:

After the wedding in Horton's Bay [Hemingway's marriage to Hadley Richardson, September 3, 1921], Ernie and Hadley honeymooned at Windemere. Later, our neighbor Earl Bacon drove Ernie and Hadley to Petoskey to catch their train to Chicago.... At the top of the Old Wash-out Road—now Eppler Road—Ernie asked him to stop. They were overlooking Little Traverse Bay. "See all that," Ernie said to Hadley. "Talk about the beauty of the Bay of Naples! I've seen them both, and no place is more beautiful than Little Traverse in its autumn colors."

Madelaine Hemingway Miller
Ernie: Hemingway's Sister "Sunny" Remembers



Ernest and Hadley Hemingway with Little Traverse Bay in the background



Ernest Hemingway, ca. 1913

Writing the Fish

Hemingway's relationship with water would eventually take him to the Gulf Stream off Havana, Cuba, and to the 1952 novella *The Old Man and the Sea.* That work would fill an entire issue of *Life*, one of the preeminent magazines of the day. Within hours of its appearance on newsstands 5,300,000 copies of the magazine were sold. The book would lead directly to Hemingway's 1953 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Nobel Prize for Literature. In it the ancient fisherman Santiago fights a huge old marlin in a three-day contest that says a great deal about the nobility of both human and sea creature. Each suffers, endures, and faces death.

The great marlin was not the first fish to engage Hemingway's literary attention in a work of fiction drawn from his life experiences on the water. A younger character, Nick Adams, meets smaller fish in the 1924 story, nearly a novella, which ends his first major collection of stories, *In Our Time.* The fish are smaller, but the themes are not. "Big Two-Hearted River" is a tale of nobility, of loss, and of mortality.

Here is how Hemingway first describes the meeting of young man and fish in the story, just after Nick has gotten off the train in the old lumber town of Seney, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and before he hikes north into the cut- and burned-over woods:



A young Ernest Hemingway fishing

Nick looked down into the clear, brown water, colored from the pebbly bottom, and watched the trout keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins. As he watched them they changed their positions by quick angles, only to hold steady in the fast water again. Nick watched them a long time.

"Big Two-Hearted River"

Today's travelers can see the trout's descendents, living under the same railway bridge that spanned the Fox River then, and can watch them as Nick did. (The actual river at Seney is the Fox; Hemingway transplanted the name of the Two-Hearted River from farther east in the Upper Peninsula, claiming that the name was poetry, which indeed it is. In fact reading Hemingway's fiction with the attention we might give to poetry—where every word counts—is helpful in understanding its effect.)

Just why Nick should watch these trout for so long a time is not precisely explained in the story, but this is not a surprise given Hemingway's characteristic methods of writing. Interviewed by the *Paris Review* during the late 1950s, Hemingway admitted—in another watery image—that he wrote according to the principle of the iceberg, in which only one eighth of the matter at hand was visible in the text of his fiction with the other seven-eighths unseen, lending weight to what actually appears on the page.

So why does Nick watch the fish? Hemingway never quite says, although early drafts of the story later published in the *Nick Adams Stories* in 1972 do include information about the fishing excursion being the young Nick's attempt to find respite from concerns about writing, marriage, and his experience of the First World War. To understand the story, perhaps we might apply a suggestion that Herman

Melville offered in the first chapter of a longer work of fiction about a somewhat more ambitious fishing trip, *Moby-Dick*: "Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever." A representative Victorian at least in this respect, Melville famously includes *everything* in his 1850 novel. As a modern writer, Hemingway does not include so much, leaving out the details of Nick's concerns in the original published version of the story.

Still, Nick has a lot to think about.

So did Hemingway. Hemingway chose to describe the story's composition in his posthumously published memoir/novel of life in literary Paris of the 1920s, *A Moveable Feast.* In that work he left us an account of the writing of "The Big Two-Hearted River" that shows his pleasure in evoking his Michigan experience in words. The subject matter of the story implicitly includes all the "big" concerns listed in *The Nick Adams Stories* in 1972, from the First World War on down. More important, for its overall effect, it directly includes what we might at first think of as "small" concerns like the concerns of lyric poetry, the sensuous details of Michigan experience. These indeed were pieces of Michigan that Hemingway took with him into the great world as a member of the expatriate "Lost Generation" of writers and artists who were inventing a modern art to mirror the modern world, in Paris during the 1920s:

> *It was a pleasant cafe [in Paris] warm and clean and friendly, and I hung up my old waterproof on the coat rack to dry and put my worn and weathered felt hat on the rack above the bench and ordered a café au lait. The waiter brought it and I took out a*



Seventeen-year-old Ernest Hemingway with his catch

notebook from the pocket of the coat and a pencil and started to write. I was writing about Michigan. . . . . What did I know best that I had not written about and lost? What did I know about truly and care for the most? There was no choice at all. . . . I sat in a corner with the afternoon light coming in over my shoulder and wrote in the noteboo . . . . When I stopped writing I did not want to leave the river where I could see the trout in the pool, its surface swelling smooth against the resistance of the log-driven piles of the bridge.

A Moveable Feast

Recollected in one peaceful moment in the Paris café, the moments of tranquility on the river with the trout give Hemingway—and Nick and the reader—a refuge from complexity. The problems of a fishing trip in the north woods are fairly simple problems, most with fairly simple, concrete solutions. What to eat? Where to camp? What bait to use? How late to stay on the river? The answers to these questions can be understood and quickly measured, and the Michigan woods become almost an Eden. Hemingway even makes Nick's experience a little more pleasant than it might actually have been in real life. There is only one mosquito in the story—the only mosquito in all of his Michigan stories—and Nick gets it before it gets to him. The big concerns, adult worries and difficulties remain to be dealt with another day.

In this story Nick Adams has lost the fear of the woods that motivated him in "The Battler," which was set earlier in Nick's life. Nick now knows that the wilderness is a place of relative safety, of connection to something eternal and reassuring:

The trout was steady in the moving stream, resting on the gravel, beside a stone. As Nick's fingers touched him, touched his smooth, cool underwater feeling, he was gone, gone in shadows across the bottom of the stream. He's all right, Nick thought. He was only tired.

"Big Two-Hearted River"

Perhaps Nick also reassures himself here. Like the trout that he releases back into the life-giving waters, he might well think of himself as only tired. When the story ends Nick has not yet faced the most difficult challenge of his fishing trip, taking on a tangled, threatening swamp. Nor has he yet returned to the complications of adult life in the modern world. But in the story, Nick knows that there will be a time that he will feel ready to fish the swamp. Hemingway implies that there also will be a time for Nick to return to thoughts of mortality and responsibility, and to the complications of life in the modern world.



The Hemingway children toasting marshmallows

Walloon Lake in the Hemingway Years

When Clarence and Grace Hall Hemingway first visited Walloon Lake the area was a well-established summer retreat, although its nature was soon to change. In the nineteenth century loggers had commercially exploited much of Michigan, including the northwest corner of the Lower Peninsula. Beginning at mid-century with Mackinac Island, the tourist industry had begun to rise in their wake. Expanding railroads and steamship lines promoted northern Michigan vacations as a way to increase their business, stressing the natural beauty of the land and water as well as the pleasant summer climate. These attributes made northwest Michigan a favorite vacation destination. By the end of the nineteenth century the tourist industry was well established, with many people staying for a season that began about the fourth of July, and others coming for weekend excursions on fast trains from big cities such as Detroit and Chicago.

Bear Lake, renamed Walloon Lake in 1900, had been a summer retreat for at least twenty years before the Hemingways' arrival. The 6.9-mile-long lake boasted more than 27 miles of shoreline and was more than 100 feet deep. The first tourist hotels had opened on the lake in the 1880s, and for twenty years these had been centers for genteel rest and recreation. At the turn of the twentieth century a change was under way. The resort hotels were beginning to be supplemented—and then replaced—by lakeside cottages, sites of family recreation in what was thought to be a more elemental, bracing environment in to the north woods. In particular, those with the means to spend the entire summer, rather than only a few days or weeks, began to buy land

and build summer cottages. Many of these cottages still stand today, often much modified and improved.

During the Hemingways' first years at Walloon Lake, "summer people" from the Chicago area usually arrived first on Little Traverse Bay at Petoskey, which could be reached easily by either Great Lakes steamers or two train lines. A spur train line from Petoskey was traversed by lightweight locomotives and coaches called the "Dummy Train." The Dummy carried travelers the few miles from Petoskey to Walloon Village, at the foot of Walloon Lake. The journey to Walloon summer cottages was usually completed on small passenger steamers that circled the lake at least twice daily. These would, upon request, stop at a cottage dock. (Grocery orders left on the dock in the morning would be delivered on the afternoon trip.) Toward the end of Ernest Hemingway's summers at Walloon Lake automobiles became more common and some adventurous travelers made all or part of the trip by car rather than by train or ship.

Once they had arrived, summer residents spent their time enjoying life in the midst of nature. They swam and fished. Boats, both sail and power, were common, with gasoline gradually replacing steam and making power boats available to individual owners. The residents tested the comparative virtues of their craft through the occasional race. Hiking and hunting were enjoyable diversions. Reading was also a popular pastime, particularly on a rainy day. Some families gardened, as much for the experience as for the food, as did the Hemingways at Longfield Farm, which was across the lake from Windemere. For special occasions several local establishments offered very satisfactory meals built around local specialties such as fresh fish or the always popular chicken.

It was a good life. For Ernest Hemingway it also proved an invaluable apprenticeship. It was a time

to learn about places and people and the weather—and the transformations brought by changing ideas and technology. Years later, when Hemingway sat down to write about his Michigan summers what emerged was not a snapshot of Walloon Lake. Neither was it an exact re-creation of the Petoskey or Horton Bay that existed between 1900 and 1920. The northern Michigan Hemingway created was something different: it was sometimes a haunting evocation of what people still express when they talk about their trip "up north." At other times it told of the older, rougher Michigan of loggers and rail men that Hemingway knew partly by experience, partly through the tales of those who had lived the pioneer life. Neither sort of story was precise journalism, but each represented the spirit of the place more accurately than could any strictly historical account.

The People and the Cost of Literature

Life with people meant complications. In describing the education of Nick Adams, Hemingway attempted to confront these complications in ways that earlier generations, particularly the Victorians, chose not to follow. It is a too-simple truism that the Victorians, people who included Hemingway's parents, did not confront the truths of human nature. This is not quite true. Rather, the Victorians often proved reticent in discussing adult subject matter, particularly when dealing with those whom they saw as innocent. Thus, in "Ten Indians," Mr. and Mrs. Garner will not repeat their private, perhaps risqué, comments for their sons and Nick. In their view the boys are not mature enough for that knowledge nor entitled to it. The private truths of a marriage are just that, intensely private and from the Victorian point of view not to be shared.

In the same story we see a little of this same sort of reticence in Dr. Adams's description of what he saw in the woods while Nick was at the Fourth of July celebration in Petoskey:

"I saw your friend Prudie."
"Where was she?"
"She was in the woods with Frank Washburn. I ran onto them. They were having quite a time."
His father was not looking at him.
"What were they doing?"
"I don't know," his father said. "I just heard them threshing around."

"How did you know it was them?"
"I saw them."
"I thought you said you didn't see them."
"Oh, yes, I saw them."
"Who was it with her?" Nick asked.
"Frank Washburn."
"Were they—were they—"
"Were they what?"
"Were they happy?"
"I guess so."
His father got up from the table and went out the kitchen screen door. When he came back Nick was looking at his plate. He had been crying."

"Ten Indians"

As an M.D., Dr. Adams certainly could be expected to know the physical facts of life, but as a Victorian gentleman he finds it hard to describe them graphically to a teenager. Thus he seems somewhat embarrassed; he cannot bring himself to look directly at Nick or to admit that he knows exactly what Prudie and Frank were doing. The doctor resorts to euphemisms—"having quite a time," "threshing around"—and only when Nick notices the lack of frankness does he even admit to having seen rather than merely heard Prudence and her lover.This is not only Victorian reticence, of course, It is also the reaction of a loving



The road from Boyne City to Wildwood Harbor, Walloon Lake

father hoping to spare his son emotional pain. Nick seems to sense a little of this, when he amends his question about what they were doing to "Were they happy?" The doctor leaves Nick alone with his emotions for reasons that are probably quite complicated, involving his own embarrassment, concern and the desire not to humiliate Nick, among a number of possibilities.

Nick's crying is a poignant touch. In its innocence it reminds us perhaps of the ending of the story "Indian Camp," in which a much younger Nick witnesses, through a series of chances, a caesarean delivery and a suicide. At the end of that story, Nick's father rows the two of them away from the encampment, across a still lake at dawn. In the early light, secure in the presence of his father, Nick trails his hand in the water and is, with intended irony on Hemingway's part, innocently sure that he will never die.Famously discussing the composition of the story, supposedly on the same day as another classic Nick Adams story, Hemingway probably overstates how fast he could write. He also understates the emotional effect of the story of disillusionment about love and of the other story, which is an account of Nick's encounter with two hired killers and their despairing victim.

> *I wrote "Ten Indians" after writing "The Killers" in Madrid on May 16 when it snowed out the San Isidro bullfight . . . . I had so much juice I thought maybe I was going crazy and I had about six other stories to write. So I got dressed and walked to Fornos, the old bull fighter's café, and drank coffee and then came back and wrote "Ten Indians." This made me very sad and I drank some brandy and went to sleep.*
>
> Ernest Hemingway
> *Paris Review*, Spring 1958

The understated sadness, bedtime brandy, and going to sleep, of course, echo the endings of many of Hemingway's stories, which do not resolve themselves neatly. Instead they end in ambiguity, what Hemingway's sometime friend, sometime rival F. Scott Fitzgerald characterized as "the dying fall." This sort of ending was at least in part Hemingway's attempt to get at the way experience presents itself in real life and in part his protest against formulaic endings in which good triumphs, evil is punished, and all is right with the world.

The short story "Up in Michigan" became a flash point for the differences between Victorian and more modern points of view. The tale of a not-wholly-satisfactory sexual encounter set in Horton Bay, it had to be cut from *In Our Time* because Scribners, Hemingway's publisher, judged it as likely to cause suppression of the entire collection under the prevailing standards of 1925. (To take its place, Hemingway quickly wrote "The Battler," a story that does have sexual elements, but in which these elements were a good deal less obvious.)

The story shows a considerable debt to Gertrude Stein, a connoisseur of modern art and an experimental writer because of its choice of a somewhat naïve young female protagonist and by its use of repetitive rhythmic patterns that recall those used by Stein:

> *Liz Coates worked for Smith's. Mrs. Smith, who was a very large clean woman, said Liz Coates was the neatest girl she'd ever seen. Liz had good legs and always wore clean gingham aprons and Jim noticed that her hair was always neat behind. He liked her face because it was so jolly but he mnever thought about her. Liz liked Jim very much. She liked it the way he walked over from the shop and often went to the kitchen door to*

watch for him to start down the road. She liked it about his mustache. She liked it about how white his teeth were when he smiled. She liked it very much that he didn't look like a blacksmith.

"Up in Michigan"

Although this story has been described recently as "a date rape," it is actually a good deal more: the account of a sexual encounter between two people who do not really know each other as well as they should and who do not communicate at all well about what they are doing. The naïve Liz is crushed by the experience. The probably well-meaning but unskilled Jim goes to sleep, not knowing the emotional pain he has inflicted upon her.

Stein faulted Hemingway for the story, calling it "*inaccrochable*"—literally, like a painting of a subject matter that could not be hung on a wall in public, though she did not really complain of its treatment of tart subject matter.

Hemingway's older sister Marcelline knew more about the roots of the story than did Stein. She expressed a far different view, one shared by the Victorian Dr. and Mrs. Hemingway:

The two main characters of the story, a man and a woman, had the same names as two of our family friends, a couple of whom we were particularly fond. The description of them in the tale, . . . fitted our friends so accurately that as I read on and realized that Ernest had put these kindly people into this vulgar, sordid tale he had invented my stomach



Katherine and Wesley Dilworth

turned over. It wasn't just the story that affected me, shocking as it was. It was Ernest's apparent lack of any decent consideration for the people whose names and detailed descriptions he had used in the story that horrified me.

Marcelline Hemingway Sanford
At the Hemingways

We do not have enough information to understand Hemingway's intentions. When he wrote the story he was in Europe and still a relatively obscure writer. He may not have realized that his use of the likenesses of the Dilworths, the family friends, would ever reach the midwestern United States. He may on the other hand have intended some sort of declaration of independence in the shocking use of their names and descriptions. (He may have somehow known something of their sexual relationship or merely have imagined it.) The truth of what he intended may involve some mixture of any or all of these elements, but we lack hard evidence of what that truth may be.

What is clear is that Hemingway was working from a far different sensibility than that expressed in horror by Marcelline, his mother, and his father. What they saw as shocking, he would have seen as realistic and even praiseworthy. He saw himself as an artist exploring previously hidden aspects of human relationships. The conflict over the story is really one involving radically changing ways of viewing the world, and it is a conflict that had its human cost, both to the people portrayed and to the writer and members of his family.

In the story, as in his many other accounts of life in northern Michigan, Hemingway was a creature of his time and place. But he was more than that. He also was intensely conscious of the ways in which his world was changing. He was able to appreciate and value the older, more traditional and more secure world, whether examining changes in transportation, or in economic life, or in personal relationships.

His Michigan stories often carry us back to a remembered older Michigan of beauty and wildness. They also show us the end of many things, whether the logging of the north woods or the end of the love between a young man and a young woman, as in "The End of Something." They show us the intrusion of the new. They show us some unpleasant truths that we might rather not know. It is precisely because of such elements—and perhaps also because we can see the connection to the old Michigan as we travel it for ourselves—that we still pay attention to these stories more than three-quarters of a century after most of them were written.

Hemingway lived in a time of great transition, but the world he knew as a boy can still be recognized. It is much like the world in which we live. Particularly when on vacation—hunting, fishing, boating, or just sitting quietly outside a cabin or tent—we may imagine that we have returned to that older Michigan. Indeed, in many ways we can, at least for a while. But we mostly live in a modern world of uncertainty and ambiguity. Hemingway wrote that world for us as well. It is to his credit that we still recognize both worlds as we move into our new century, much as he moved into his.



Contemporary view, Windemere Cottage fireplace



A Michigan trout stream

Afterword

The creation of "Hemingway in Michigan—Michigan in Hemingway" involved the talents and support of many individuals and groups. As director of the Clarke Library I am honored to recognize the support of many individuals and pleased to acknowledge the assistance of the many talented people who worked on various aspects of the exhibition.

A number of hands did the work that created this exhibit. Central Michigan University graduate student Rebecca Zeiss designed the wall panels and banners that grace the exhibit. Ms. Zeiss took a large number of original photographs, some of which appear in both the exhibit and the exhibit catalog. Her experience in design also enlivened and enriched this catalog.

Mary C. Graham, assistant editor of the *Michigan Historical Review*, found time to edit and proofread all manner of printed material associated with the exhibit. Her well-sharpened pencil and sound ear for language are quietly witnessed in innumerable textual improvements. An editor's job is truly a peculiar one, as success is measured in how few mistakes appear in the final document and perfection makes the editor appear unnecessary. Only those who have seen a work before its debut can appreciate what the editor has done. Ms. Graham has done much in the preparation of this exhibit for which I am extraordinarily grateful.

The support of several individuals and groups made this exhibit possible. The Michigan Hemingway Society made both a generous financial contribution to help underwrite the cost of the exhibit and also formed a special working committee, consisting primarily of the organization's governing board, to help conceptualize the exhibit

and review it at various stages in its evolution and progress. We are indebted to the Michigan Hemingway Society for this support.

Frederic J. Svoboda, professor of English at the University of Michigan–Flint, gave generously of his time and his deep knowledge of Hemingway to write the text found in this catalog. The thousands of words found here reflect his many years studying Hemingway's writings about Michigan, and the exhibit benefited greatly from his unselfish sharing of his often hard-won knowledge.

Michael Federspiel was, in many ways, the moving spirit behind this exhibit. His generous gift of a large body of Hemingway material to the Clarke Library, his creation of the Federspiel Hemingway Endowment within the Clarke Library, and his unstinting generosity in giving his time and his talent gave birth to the exhibit and helped open doors and shape ideas at critical moments in its genesis. The truth is that there would have been no Hemingway exhibit in the Clarke without the help and active involvement of Mr. Federspiel.

Ernest H. Mainland proved to be a good friend. Mr. Mainland made available photographs for reproduction. He granted access to Windemere cottage and also made several important loans, including two paintings by Grace Hall Hemingway and the "Lucky" fishing rod from Windemere.

James and Marian Sanford were extraordinarily gracious and helpful in planning this exhibit. They gave us invaluable advice regarding photographs and helped us locate several important artifacts.

The list of those to whom I am indebted is long and my thanks to all those mentioned above is great. I trust that the final result will justify the great hopes and significant trust placed in the Clarke.

Frank Boles, Director
Clarke Library

Acknowledgements

The Library wishes to acknowledge and thank the following sources:

The American Museum of Fly Fishing
Ernest H. Mainland
James and Marian Sanford
Michael Federspiel
Ken Marek
Simon & Schuster, Inc.
John F. Kennedy Library
The Michigan Hemingway Society
Frederic J. Svoboda

Photo Credits

Our thanks to those who made photographs available for reproduction:

Clarke Historical Library, pp. 15, 24, 44.
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, cover images (Hemingway in uniform, mother and three children) and p. 30.
Ernest H. Mainland, p. 35; access for contemporary images, pp. 11, 51.
Contemporary images by Rebecca Zeiss, pp. 8 (contemporary images), 11, 17, 18, 29 (view), 51, 52.

Clarke Historical Library Board of Governors

John H. Logie, chairman
Frank Boles (ex officio)
Norman E. Clarke, Jr. (family representative)
Sandra Croll
Charles Ebel (ex officio)
Robert Griffin
Thomas Moore (ex officio)
Michael Rao (ex officio)
William Strickler
Robert Warner

CMU, an AA/EO institution, strongly and actively strives to increase diversity within its community (for more information see http://www.cmich.edu/aaeo/). Printed by: CMU Printing Services.

Central Michigan University