

Native American Trails



Early Native American Trails

In late autumn, local Ojibwe bands moved inland to hunting areas. Chief Mah-je-gezhik (which means 'moving day' in the Ojibwe dialect) moved from Presque Isle at Lake Superior, to his winter encampment on the east shore of Teal Lake.

Illustration: Mike Lempinen

Many of our modern roads follow early trails made by Indigenous peoples.

The Paleo Indians (11,500 - 8,000 BC) followed herds of caribou through this region during the Ice Age. They used local quartzite for spear points.

The Archaic Indians (5,000 BC) removed copper from the Keweenaw Peninsula and Isle Royale. Some of this copper was used in implements found as far south as Florida.

The Anishnaabe (900 AD) migrated from the east following conflicts with other tribes. They were hunter/gatherers -- setting fish nets along the lake edges, hunting game, gathering maple syrup, picking berries, and harvesting wild rice. In winter, they followed the game migration to southern parts of the peninsula.

Native American trails were like our present highways, without paving and stop signs. They were so well traveled that at places the depression of the soil is still visible.



Early Road Construction
Marquette County

Photo: Marquette Regional
History Center



Photo: Jim Paquette

Paleo Indian stone spear points from the last Ice Age.

The 12,000 year old artifacts were discovered in 1985, at Silver Lake, north of Ishpeming, Michigan, by John Gorto and Jim Paquette.



When the survey party of William Austin Burt arrived at the mouth of Carp River in 1844, his men followed an old Native American trail westward toward Teal Lake. This map depicts trails that existed in this region in 1845, the year that the Philo Everett prospectors arrived to stake the Jackson Mine claim.

Map: Mike Lempinen
Based on Trygg Map of
Native American Trails - ca. 1845