PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-11

Older than "about 1839": the Treats, Henry Dewey and the red-chalk warning on the road to Dewey's Lake, Silver Creek Township, Michigan

Michael Urbanski ORCID 0009-0006-8183-5828 (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8183-5828), Project Scroll · Issued 27 October 2026 · Version 1 · a permanent identifier (DOI) will be added here

SUMMARY

The 1882 *History of Cass County, Michigan* tells how Timothy Treat's family, coming up an old track from Indian Lake into Silver Creek Township, found at the fork at the south-east corner of Section 16, "one branch leading to Dewey's Lake, the other to their future home," a peeled tree on which an earlier traveler had written in red chalk: "Turn to the left and go to the Devil." The same page has the family leave Aurora, New York, "In September, 1837," and reach Silver Creek only "After a residence of two years in the town of Ontwa": about 1839. The book's own township records put them there earlier. Timothy Treat was elected the township's first supervisor at its first town meeting, in April 1837. He, his son Sullivan and Henry Dewey are on the township's roll of resident taxpayers for 1838, and Timothy Treat and Henry Dewey on the poll list of its first election after that meeting, in 1838. The family genealogy of 1893 has Timothy in Michigan from the fall of 1834 and Sullivan settling in Silver Creek "at the age of twenty-one," about 1832; it places Timothy's tenth child, born in March 1835, neither in Aurora nor in Silver Creek; and it records his daughter Fidelia's marriage to Philander Dunning, a Silver Creek taxpayer of 1838, in July 1835. A neighbor in Keeler Township, Van Buren County, who began his cabin on 7 April 1837, named "Samuel Treat, at Silver Creek" as his neighbor to the south. The warning

> therefore stood at the fork before April 1837, and probably earlier. And Henry Dewey, whose settlement by the lake an old resident put "not until 1841," was voting and taxed in Silver Creek in 1838.

THE RECORD

1. **Alfred Mathews, *History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), Silver Creek Township, p. 356**

   > *"In September, 1837, Timothy Treat with his family ... left their home in Aurora, Erie County, N. Y. ... After a residence of two years in the town of Ontwa, he removed to Silver Creek ... At the southeast corner of Section 16 the road forked, one branch leading to Dewey's Lake, the other to their future home. Some disconsolate emigrant had preceded them ... he had erected a primitive guide-post by removing the bark from a tree on which he had written with red chalk the ominous inscription: 'Turn to the left and go to the Devil.'" And: "Henry Dewey, one of the early settlers of Pokagon, entered land on Sec. 8 in 1835. The date of his settlement is not known. Daniel Blish is positive that it was not until 1841. It may have been shortly before this time." And: "the second Monday in April found them convened at the place appointed, for the purpose of electing township officials. Timothy Treat was elected Supervisor."*

   Internet Archive (University of Michigan copy) · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00wate/page/356/mode/1up)

2. **Mathews, *History of Cass County* (1882), Silver Creek Township, pp. 357–358: the first poll list and the roll of resident taxpayers for 1838**

> *"from the records of the first election succeeding the first township meeting … The following is the poll list: First day— … Henry Dewey … Second day — … P. B. Dunning … Timothy Treat … In the November election of the next year, 1839, … Sullivan Treat …" And: "The following list embraces the names of all those who were assessed as resident taxpayers in the year 1838, and the valuation of their lands … Philander B. Dunning 609 · Timothy Treat 396 · Sullivan Treat 240 · Henry Dewey 1571 · Patrick Hamilton 1690 · Neapon Pokagon 2602."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00wate/page/358/mode/1up)

3. **John Harvey Treat, *The Treat Family: A Genealogy of Trott, Tratt, and Treat* (Salem, Mass.: Salem Press, 1893), no. 191 (Timothy Treat), pp. 68–69**

> *"He remained in Aurora till the fall of 1834, when he removed to Michigan and settled near Niles, Berrien Co. In the fall of 1837, he moved some twenty-five miles and settled in Silver Creek township … Children, the first nine born in Aurora, the last three in Silver Creek … Fidelia, b. Oct. 15, 1818; m. July —, 1835, Philander Dunning … Horace Jay, b. March 13, 1835."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/treatfamilygenea0000john/page/68/mode/1up)

4. **Treat, *The Treat Family* (1893), no. 386 (Sullivan Treat), p. 93**

> *"born Jan. 18, 1811, in Aurora, Erie Co., N. Y. … At the age of twenty-one, Mr. Treat left New York and settled in Silver Creek, Cass Co., Mich., on a heavily timbered farm, which he cleared, enduring all the privations incident to pioneer life."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/treatfamilygenea0000john/page/93/mode/1up)

5. ***History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan*** **(Philadelphia: D. W. Ensign & Co., 1880), Keeler Township, p. 478**

> *"Ira Foster ... on the 7th day of April, 1837, commenced to chop and to build a log cabin ... His nearest neighbor was James Hill, on section 11, on the north; on the south was Samuel Treat, at Silver Creek, in Cass County."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofberrien00ensi/page/478/mode/1up)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The 1882 story's "about 1839," which this site first repeated, is too late for the Treats, and so for the red-chalk sign they found already standing. The township's own records put Timothy Treat in Silver Creek by April 1837 and on its rolls in 1838, and the family genealogy and a Van Buren neighbor point earlier still. The warning on the road to Dewey's Lake is older than April 1837. The rolls also answer the question the 1882 book left open about the lake's namesake: Henry Dewey was voting and taxed in Silver Creek in 1838, three years before the date Daniel Blish gave, so the name "Dewey's Lake" on the Treats' road need not be a later writer's name. No telling of the Dewey Lake Monster that we found mentions the sign, the Treats or Henry Dewey.

LIMITS

The rolls show residence and taxable land, not the day of arrival; the poll list is dated by the book's own sequence ("the next year, 1839"), not by a date printed on it. The genealogy's "at the age of twenty-one" would put Sullivan in Silver Creek about 1832, before the township's first land entries (his own entry is 17 May 1836); it may compress his first years near Niles. The place of Horace Jay Treat's birth in March 1835 is inferred from the genealogy's rule for the children, not stated. "Samuel Treat" in the 1880 Keeler history is read as Sullivan, the only Treat of Silver Creek on the 1838 rolls besides his father; the neighbor list is not dated. The 1882 table of land entries also

lists a second Sullivan Treat entry of 17 May 1836 under Silver Creek's Section 7; the federal patent of 1839 puts that tract in Section 7 of Range 15 West, in the township to the east. The township's first minutes and the federal tract books, which might settle the Treats' year, have not been read.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Wikipedia's articles on the Dewey Lake Monster and on Silver Creek Township; Silver Creek Township's own history page; the Cass County MIGenWeb history pages; Robert Atkinson's survey of the 1964 papers (2017); Hammond, *Mysterious Michigan* (2022); *FATE* (1964), Steiger (1969), Keel (1970) and Bord (1982) in Internet Archive full-text search; Zenodo's record search ("Dewey Lake," "Timothy Treat," "Silver Creek" with "Cass County"); web searches for the red-chalk sign, Timothy Treat with Silver Creek, Henry Dewey with Silver Creek and 1838, and the Dewey Lake Monster on OSF, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Semantic Scholar and JSTOR (October 2026). None of these dates the sign or puts the Treats or Henry Dewey on the 1838 rolls.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. Michael Urbanski, "The True Story of the Dewey Lake Monster: The Week the Valley Went Wild," *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/the-week-dewey-lake-went-wild/

2. “Dewey Lake Monster,” *Wikipedia* (accessed October 2026). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewey_Lake_Monster
3. Robert Atkinson, “Monster Town USA: The 1964 Sister Lakes Monster Sightings” (29 July 2017). https://www.robert-atkinson.com/monster-town-usa-the-1964-sister-lakes-monster-sightings/
4. Silver Creek Township, “History” (accessed October 2026). https://silvercreektwpmi.gov/history/
5. D. J. Lake, *Atlas of Cass County, Michigan* (Philadelphia: C. O. Titus, 1872), Silver Creek Township, p. 7. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/2911323.0001.001.umich.edu
6. Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office records: Sullivan Treat, patent of 1 May 1839. https://glorecords.blm.gov/
7. Amberrose Hammond, Mysterious Michigan (The History Press, 2022), pp. 128–133: a later account of the week, with its own list of the 1964 papers. https://arcadiapublishing.com/collections/all-titles/products/9781467149921
8. “The Monster at Sister Lakes,” *FATE*, October 1964: Gordon Brown on the Harold Utrup farm. Read in Internet Archive full-text search. https://archive.org/details/fate_v17_n10_oct_1964
9. Eric Norman (Brad Steiger), *The Abominable Snowmen* (1969): Gordon Brown “from nearby Dowagiac” and the car. Read in Internet Archive full-text search. https://archive.org/details/the-abominable-snowmen-eric-norman
10. John A. Keel, *Strange Creatures from Time and Space* (1970): John Utrup and Gordon Brown. Read in Internet Archive full-text search. https://archive.org/details/strangecreatures0000john
11. Janet and Colin Bord, *The Bigfoot Casebook* (1982): “Evelyn Utrup and her husband John”; Gordon Brown, “a fruit picker from Georgia.” Read in Internet Archive full-text search. https://archive.org/details/bigfootcasebook0000bord

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in The True Story of the Dewey Lake Monster: The Week the Valley Went Wild (projectscroll.com/news/the-week-dewey-lake-went-wild/). In the discoveries register:

- `dewey-treat-dates` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#dewey-treat-dates)
- `dewey-treat-contradictions` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#dewey-treat-contradictions)
- `dewey-1838-rolls` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#dewey-1838-rolls)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

Michael Urbanski, “Older than ‘about 1839’: the Treats, Henry Dewey and the red-chalk warning on the road to Dewey’s Lake, Silver Creek Township, Michigan,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-11, version 1 (27 October 2026), https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-11/.

BibTeX

```
@techreport{urbanski202611,
  author      = {Urbanski, Michael},
  orcid       = {0009-0006-8183-5828},
  title       = {{Older than ``about 1839'': the Treats, Henry Dewey and
the red-chalk warning on the road to Dewey's Lake, Silver Creek
Township, Michigan}},
  institution = {Project Scroll},
  type        = {Project Scroll Research Note},
  number      = {2026-11},
  year        = {2026},
  month       = {oct},
  url         = {https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-11/},
  note        = {Version 1}
}
```