

AU SABLE RIVER BOAT
Michigan Maritime Museum
South Haven
Van Buren County
Michigan

HAER MI-409
MI-409

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

AUSABLE RIVER BOAT

HAER No. MI-409

Location: Michigan Maritime Museum Collections, South Haven, Michigan

Date of Construction: Circa 1913

Rig/Type of Craft: River boat/Fishing vessel

Material: Cypress wood plank

Length: 23 ft. – 7 in.

Beam: 3 ft.

Propulsion: Push pole or paddle

Built: Commercially-made, circa 1913, by Arthur Wakely, Grayling, MI

Present Owner: Michigan Maritime Museum

Present Use: Museum Artifact

Significance: Indigenous to Michigan, the Au Sable River Boat is a unique and historic traditional small craft. The first written account of Michigan's Au Sable River Boat appeared in the 1879 *Scribner's* monthly. The origin of the boat's design has been a subject of dispute. Some locals claim it was influenced by dugout canoes made by local Indians such as Chief Shoppenagon - a legendary guide. Others contend it is related to the Bateaux, brought to the river during the lumbering boom years between 1867 and 1883 when one and one-third billion feet of logs rolled out on the Au Sable River. The boat was used to haul men and equipment to and from the logging camps. In later years, it found great favor with fishermen and guides on the river. In a smaller version, it is a popular fly fishing boat today. This early craft spent recent years in use as a flower planter near Grayling before being donated to the Museum by Steve Southard. It features a live well for fish, a circa 1890 design modification.

Historian: Michigan Maritime Museum