

Houghton, Douglass, 1809-1845.

Papers, 1832, 1839.

1 microfilm reel. Originals in the Minnesota Historical Society (Saint Paul, Minn.).

Collation of the originals: 2 folders, containing 5 items.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Douglass Houghton was born on September 21, 1809, in Troy, New York, the son of Jacob and Maria Douglas Houghton. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1829 and immediately assumed an assistant professorship in chemistry and natural history in that institution.

In 1830, he was invited to Detroit (Michigan) to give a series of lyceum lectures on chemistry, biology, and geology. He settled in Detroit, receiving his medical license in 1831, and practiced as a physician, surgeon, and dentist from 1832 through 1837.

In 1831, he served as naturalist on Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's expedition to explore the area between Lake Superior and the Mississippi River. He also served as botanist, geologist, and physician on Schoolcraft's 1832 expedition into the Upper Mississippi River region and was among the party that determined Lake Itasca to be the source of the Mississippi River.

He was appointed Michigan state geologist in 1837 and, in 1838, became a professor of geology and mineralogy at the University of Michigan. As state geologist, he spent the majority of his summers surveying the state of Michigan for the Michigan Geological Survey. He also served (1842-1843) as mayor of Detroit.

Houghton married Harriet Stevens in 1833. They had two daughters. Houghton was drowned during a storm on Lake Superior on October 13, 1845.

Biographical data was taken from Theodore Christianson, Minnesota: A History of the State and Its People, vol. 1, p. 132-135, and from Who Was Who In America: Historical Volume, p. 331.

See also Philip P. Mason, Narrative of an Expedition to Lake Itasca: Discovery of the Source of the Mississippi (1958), which includes portions of these papers; Minnesota History, 13:320; and the Grace Lee Nute Papers, manuscript #41, also in the Minnesota Historical Society.

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Recataloged by
Cheryl Norenberg Thies
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DESCRIPTION OF THE PAPERS

Focusing mainly on Houghton's participation in the 1831 and 1832 Schoolcraft expeditions, the papers also contain information on his activities as a University of Michigan professor and Michigan state geologist. They are divided into three sections: diaries (June 23-Aug. 25, 1832), smallpox vaccination records (June 5-July 31, 1832), and letters (1832, 1839). The following paragraphs highlight each section's content.

Diaries, June 23-Aug. 25, 1832.

Transcript (typewritten), 72 p. The original diaries, owned by the Michigan Historical Commission (Lansing, Mich.), were destroyed by fire in 1956.

Schoolcraft's 1832 expedition, undertaken with the official sanction of the United States government, sought to establish peace among the Upper Mississippi River Indian tribes, especially the Ojibwe and Dakota, and to vaccinate them against smallpox. Schoolcraft also intended to use the expedition as a means to discover the true source of the Mississippi River.

The 30-member party included Houghton; Rev. William T. Boutwell, representative of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; Lt. James Allen, a topographer and head of the military escort; and George Johnston, interpreter.

The expedition embarked from Sault Ste. Marie (hereafter referred to as the Sault) and travelled by canoe via Lake Superior to Fond du Lac. From there it followed the St. Louis River, portaged to Sandy Lake, and then continued along the Mississippi to Cass Lake. From Cass Lake, Schoolcraft led a party of 16, including Houghton, to the source of the Mississippi, which he named Lake Itasca (referred to in the diaries as Elk Lake). Following their return to Cass Lake, the full expedition moved on to Leech Lake, and then by way of the Crow Wing (referred to in the diaries as the River des Corbeau) and Mississippi rivers to Fort Snelling. It then moved up the St. Croix and Brule rivers to LaPointe, a mission on Lake Superior's Madeline Island. Schoolcraft, with part of the expedition's members, left

immediately for the Sault. Houghton and Allen left several days later, visiting the copper deposits in upper Michigan, especially the "Copper Rock" on the Ontonagon River, on their return trip to the Sault.

Houghton's diaries, originally recorded in seven small volumes, cover the expedition's movements from Fond du Lac through his return to the Sault. Volume 1, which presumably detailed the journey from the Sault to Fond du Lac, was lost prior to this transcription.

The daily entries contain comments on the country's ever-changing geology, flora, and fauna; portaging and canoe repairs; the weather; hunting; the ever-present mosquitoes; and the number of Indians vaccinated in each village, along with other medical tasks he performed, particularly the extraction of teeth. Each volume also contains a detailed record of mileage between campsites and data about Ojibwe medical habits and customs, particularly their medicinal use of plants.

The following annotations highlight additional events covered in the volumes:

- Vol. 3. Descriptions of Lake Itasca (July 13) and of the Ojibwe chief Flat Mouth's Leech Lake camp, with comments on Flat Mouth and on a council held with his tribe (July 17).
- Vol. 4. Relates stops at St. Anthony Falls (July 24) and Fort Snelling (July 25).
- Vol. 5. Details night spearfishing by several Indian boys (July 30).
- Vol. 6. Describes LaPointe Mission (Aug. 7-12) and the journey up the Ontonagon River to the "Copper Rock" (Aug. 14-16). Also a detailed description of an Indian sweat lodge and its uses.
- Vol. 7. Documents a Lake Superior storm (Aug. 21-22) and arrival at the Sault (Aug. 24).

Smallpox Vaccination Records, June 5-July 31, 1832.

Photocopies, 16 p. The originals of these records were lost in the Michigan Historical Commission fire.

Pages of the eighth volume kept by Houghton during the 1832 expedition containing detailed records of the 2,070 Ojibwe Indians he vaccinated.

Organized by band, they include statistics for five age groups and are divided into female and male categories. They also record each band's predominant diet, whether each band was increasing or decreasing in number in 1832, diseases present within each band, and some historical facts, including the origin of a 1784 smallpox outbreak.

Letters, 1832, 1839. 3 items.

Photocopies of originals loaned by the New York Botanical Gardens (NYC).

Letters from Houghton, in Fredonia, New York (1832), and Detroit (1839), to John Towey, chemistry and natural history professor at the College of Physicians and Surgeons (New York City).

The first letter (March 20, 1832) describes Houghton's role as naturalist on Schoolcraft's 1831 expedition and contains a list of plants collected on that trip. The second letter (Nov. 24, 1832) comments on the delayed shipment of his rock, mineral, and shell samples from the 1832 expedition and his move to Detroit. It also contains a partial list of plants collected during the 1832 expedition. The last letter (Nov. 1, 1839) focuses on his activities at the University of Michigan and on botanical specimens collected while exploring the upper Michigan coast.

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Botanists, American.

Botany, Midwestern states - Field work.

Canoes and Canoeing.

Chippewa Indians - Census.

Chippewa Indians - Councils.

Chippewa Indians - Fishing.

Chippewa Indians - Government relations.

Chippewa Indians - Health and hygiene.

Chippewa Indians - Medicine.

Chippewa Indians - Minnesota.

Chippewa Indians - Rites and ceremonies.

Chippewa Indians - Wisconsin.

Copper Ores - Michigan.

Crow Wing River (Minn.) - Description and travel.

Diaries.

Flat Mouth (Chippewa chief), ca.1774-ca.1860.

Fort Snelling (Minn.) - Description.

Geologists - United States.

Geology - Midwestern states - Field work.

Lake Itasca (Minn.) - Discovery and exploration.

Lake Superior - Description and travel.

LaPointe (Madeline Island, Wis.) - Description.

Michigan - Description and travel.

Minnesota - Description and travel.

Mississippi River - Discovery and exploration.

Naturalists - United States.

Physicians, American.

St. Anthony Falls (Minn.) - Description and travel.

St. Croix River - Description and travel.

Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe, 1793-1864.

Schoolcraft Expedition, 1831.

Schoolcraft Expedition, 1832.

Smallpox - Preventive inoculation.

Towey, John.

United States - Exploring expeditions.

Wisconsin - Description and travel.