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The Sanilac Petroglyphs, Paleo-cryptozoology, and Controversy

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[PHOTO GALLERY](#)

The [Sanilac Petroglyphs](#) is a Michigan State Historic Site located in the center of Michigan's Thumb area. Though this site is jointly administered by the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#) and [Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries](#), the pavilion surrounding the petroglyph area is currently closed to the public. The park is not staffed due to Michigan budget concerns, and the area is fenced in and locked. However, it is possible to get permission to view the petroglyphs if you contact the park manager at [Albert E. Sleeper State Park](#). There may be a use fee involved. Great care must be taken when viewing the petroglyphs not to touch them, walk on them, or harm them in any way.

To get to the petroglyphs from the south, take M-53 north to Bay City - Forestville Road, turn right and go past New Greenleaf about 8 miles. Germania Road turns south and a parking lot for the petroglyph trail is almost immediately on the right hand side. If you are coming from the north, the petroglyphs are almost directly south of Bad Axe about ten miles.

We visited the site May 31, 2003. One of our interests in visiting the site had to do with whether or not there is any correlation between the carvings on the sandstone at this site and the Soper-Savage artifacts (commonly called "frauds" by many researchers). The Soper-Savage collection is a featured exhibit at the [Michigan](#)

[Historical Museum](#) in Lansing, and because these artifacts depict Christian symbols, the cross, creation and flood stories, they present problems for those who believe that the European's first contact with America was Columbus. One person who accompanied our group was particularly fascinated by a possibility of correlation with these artifacts, as he had done some photography for the [Ancient American](#) magazine. Our TV co-host, Rich Geer, also was interested as he works for the museum as the staff artist, and plays a major role in setting up these exhibits.

The rest of us wanted to visit the site for other reasons. The Michigan Historical Museum tells of the legendary Me-she-pe-shiw, the "underwater panther" that was a powerful, malicious spirit in the form of a horned mountain lion with a spiny back. It lived in lakes and caused storms by thrashing its tail. We wanted to photograph the petroglyphs that depicted this creature. Our purpose was to speculate whether this creature actually matched the morphology of known extinct animals. Our belief is that many animals, such as dinosaurs, survived to fairly recent times and carvings of these animals by Indians are from their actual encounters with these creatures. The petroglyphs we found at [Natural Bridges National Monument](#) depicting sauropod dinosaurs caught our interest, and we have been looking at petroglyph sites ever since. In his book, *Red Earth, White Lies*, [Vine Deloria, Jr.](#) talks about the history of America from a Native American point of view, and creatures of this sort were often mentioned in the oral traditions. Though this author is not particularly open to Christianity or Biblical creationism, he is particularly honest in his rejection of the traditional evolutionary explanation, and advocates examining the stories told by Indians concerning the days preceding Columbus in a straightforward manner. Other petroglyphs in the museum exhibit were Ah-ne-mi-ke the Thunderbird, Ne-gig, the Great Otter, and Michi-gi-zhik, the white cedar, medicine tree. Some creationists believe the thunderbird could have been a pterodactyl-like creature.

Our group examined the petroglyphs, and although there is nothing about these that would make a decent case for any of these explanations, we thought they were quite intriguing. There are certainly much better petroglyphs that depict extinct creatures, and these would excite only the most imaginative of cryptozoologists among us. Some of the writing and symbols in the sandstone looked European in nature, and this gave our *Ancient American* photographer additional incentive to do more research, but there is very little to go on. We have no stake in the controversy surrounding the Soper-Savage relics, but we have to be careful that the lack of credibility of Mr. Soper as a person should not be the determining factor to assess whether those artifacts are genuine or fake.

Deloria believes that the "water panther" could have been a stegosaurus. Several of the scientists in our group commented that this first petroglyph resembles a glyptodont or doedicurus. These creatures were large armadillo-like creatures about the size of a Volkswagen, and this photograph shows the creature in a curled-up defensive position, much like that of the armadillo. Both of these carvings also feature a long spiky tail. Immediately above the "glyptodont" petroglyph is a faded carving that is quite intriguing.



"glyptodont?" or "doedicurus?"



original



outlined

"water panther"

The figure at the left resembles a creature that has a skull frill and three horns, much like a triceratops. This matches the speculation of cryptozoologist John Goertzen that the Biblical "reem" could have been this creature.

The ancient symbols and writing we found was quite fascinating, since many of these symbols looked familiar. One carving looked like a menorah, there were many crosses and handprints, and the inscriptions looked like Roman numerals. Vine Deloria talks about Indian legends of a white-skinned race that was driven out by the Salish, Sioux and Algonkian tribes to the northeast. Other legends say that it was this race that built the mounds, not the ancestors of the present Indian tribes.



"menorah"



crosses



symbols



Roman numerals and letters

These petroglyphs are indeed intriguing, and a creationist framework allows for more flexibility in interpretation of their meaning. However, there is nothing here that is conclusive where an evolutionist couldn't interpret the "triceratops" glyph as a moose, or attribute any of the glyphs to Indian mythology or imagination. As for a link that might verify the authenticity the Soper-Savage artifacts, there is little to go on here, though the above photos invite speculation.

Here are a few links to various web pages that talk about the Michigan Plates or the Soper-Savage collection.

[Detroit News article](#) (con)

[Ancient American Issue 26](#) (pro)

[The Burrows Cave Controversy](#) (con)

[Burrows Cave](#) (pro)

[The Soper-Savage Collection](#) (pro)

The Michigan Historical Museum's exhibit of this collection shows how extensive this collection of artifacts was, and my biggest question is -- if these were indeed fakes, what motivated Soper to spend countless hours creating them?

The Revolution Against Evolution takes no stand on the authenticity of the Soper-Savage collection or their interpretation. Nor do we claim that the animal petroglyphs at Sanilac are conclusive representations of extinct creatures. We simply present the raw photographic evidence and invite you to make your own determination.

Note: The Revolution Against Evolution is not associated with the Ancient American magazine, Mormons, Anglo-Israelites, or any other group that promotes the Soper-Savage collection as part of proof for their doctrine.

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