

## **"The Rochester of Michigan"** [From the Grand River Times, April 18, 1837]

Though young in its improvements, the site of this village has long been known and esteemed for its natural advantages. It was here that the Indian Traders long since made their grand depot. It was at this point that the missionary herald established his institution of learning -- taught the forest child the beauty of civilization, and inestimable benefits of the Christian religion. This has been the choicest, dearest spot of the unfortunate Indian, and now is the pride of the white man. Like other villages of the west, its transition from the savage to a civilized state has been as sudden as its prospects are now flattering.

Who would have believed, to have visited this place two years since, when it was only inhabited by a few families, most of whom were of French origin, a people so eminent for exploring the wilds and meandering rivers, that this place would now contain its twelve hundred inhabitants? Who would have imagined that thus rapid would have been the improvement of this romantic place? The rapidity of its settlement is beyond the most visionary anticipation; but its location, its advantages, and its clime, were sufficient to satisfy the observing mind that nothing but the frown of Providence could blast its prospects!

The river upon which this town is situated is one of the most important and delightful to be found in the country -- not important and beautiful alone for its clear, silver-like water winding its way through a romantic valley of some hundred miles, but for its width and depth, its susceptibility for steam navigation, and the immense hydraulic power afforded at this point.

We feel deeply indebted to our Milwaukee friends for their lucid description of the advantages to be derived from a connection of the waters of this river with those of Detroit, by canal or railroad. A canal is nearly completed around the Rapids at this place, sufficiently large to admit boats to pass up and down, with but little detention. Several steamboats are now preparing to commence regular trips from Lyons, at the mouth of the Maple River, to this place, a distance of sixty miles, and from this to Grand Haven, a distance of thirty-five or forty miles; thence to Milwaukee and Chicago.

Thus the village of Grand Rapids, with a navigable stream -- water power of twenty-five feet fall -- and abundance of crude building materials -- stone of excellent quality -- pine, oak and other timber in immense quantities within its vicinity, can but flourish -- can but be the Rochester of Michigan! The basement story of an extensive mill, one hundred and sixty by forty feet, is now completed; a part of the extensive machinery is soon to be put in operation. There are now several dry goods and grocery stores -- some three or four public houses -- one large church erected, and soon to be finished in good style, upon the expense of a single individual, who commenced business a few years ago by a small traffic with the Indians. Such is the encouragement to western pioneers! The village plat is upon a bold bank of the river, extending back upon an irregular plain, some eighty to a hundred rods, to rising bluffs, from the base and sides of which some of the most pure, crystal-like fountains of water burst out in boiling springs, pouring forth streams that murmur over their pebbly bottoms, at once a delight to the eye, and an invaluable luxury to the thirsty palate.

New England may surpass this place with her lofty mountains, but not with her greatest boast -- purity and clearness of water. Our soil is sandy, and monthly dry. The town is delightful, whether

you view it from the plain, upon the banks of the river, or from the bluffs that overlook the whole surrounding country. To ascend these bluffs, you take a gradual rise to the height of a hundred feet, when the horizon only limits the extent of vision. The scenery to an admirer of beautiful landscape is truly picturesque and romantic. Back, east of the town, is seen a wide-spread plain of burr-oak, at one easy to cultivate, and inviting to the agriculturist. Turning westward, especially at the setting of the sun, you behold the most enchanting prospect -- the din of the ville below -- the broad sheet of water murmuring over the Rapids -- the sunbeams dancing upon its swift-gliding ripples -- the glassy river at last losing itself in its distance meanderings -- present a scenery that awakens the most lively emotions. But the opposite shore, upon which you behold a rich, fertile plain, still claims no small amount of admiration. Near the bank of the river is seen the little rude village of the more civilized Indians -- their uncouth framed dwellings -- their little churches and their mound-like burying places. The number and size of the mounds which mark the spot where lie the remains of the proud warrior, and the more humble of his untamed tribe, too plainly tell the endearments of that lovely plain to the native aborigines, and how quick the mind will follow the train of associations to by-gone days. and contrast these reflections with present appearances. Thus we see the scenes of savage life, quickly spread upon the broad canvas of the imagination -- the proud chieftain seated, and his tribe surrounding the council fires -- the merry war-dance -- the wild amusements of the "red man of the forest," and as soon think of their present unhappy condition; the bright flame of their lighted piles has been extinguished, and with it has faded the keen, expressive brilliancy of the wild man's eye! Their lively Washtenong, upon which their light canoes have so long glided, is now almost deserted!

It is from this point, too, that you can see in the distance the evergreen tops of the lofty pine, waving in majesty above the study oak, the beech and maple, presenting to the eye a wild, undulating plain, with its thousand charms. Such are the location, the beauties and advantages of this youthful town. The citizens are of the most intelligent, enterprising and industrious character. Their buildings are large, tasty and handsomely furnished -- the clatter of mallet and chisel -- the clink of hammers -- the many newly raised and recently covered frames the river, speak loudly for the enterprise of the place! Mechanics of all kinds find abundance of employ, and reap a rich reward for their labor. Village property advances in values, and the prospect of wealth is alike flattering to all! What the result of such advantages and prospects will be, time alone must determine.

But a view of this place and its vicinity, where we find a rich and fertile soil, watered with the best of springs, and enjoying, as we do, a salubrious climate, a healthful atmosphere, and the choicest gifts of a benign Benefactor, would satisfy almost any one that this will soon be a bright star in the constellation of western villages. Such, gentle reader, is a faint description of the place from which our paper hails -- from which, we hope, will emanate matter as pleasing and interesting, as the town is beautiful and inviting!

*Note: Evidently the editor of the Times in his enthusiasm overdrew the picture somewhat; especially in the statements regarding the water power, the steamboat building, and the canal improvement.*