

# Reviews of *Jody's Michigan Adventures*



I. Excerpted from Susan Stark, "Children's Books Put Spotlight on Great Places in Michigan," *The Detroit News*, Summer 1999.

It doesn't get more Michiganish than a set of children's books about interesting Michigan sites by Rochester native Leigh Arrathoon.

Cast as family travel adventures in the state, the books take parents and two children out and about under the leadership of a magical mouse named Jody. The Detroit

book covers Eastern Market, Greektown, the RenCen and more, then extends the journey northward to the Detroit Zoo, a major destination.

Packed with information, written in rolling conversational style and illustrated by Ken Hajdyla of Dearborn Heights with an eye to accuracy as well as charm, this is a little book that celebrates Detroit with spirit and conviction.

The other titles in Arrathoon's Jody's Michigan Adventure series: Greenfield Village, Mackinac Island, Frankenmuth, Holland, Northwest, Upper Peninsula . . .

The books will soon be available directly from Archus Press. Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at [leigharrathoon@gmail.com](mailto:leigharrathoon@gmail.com).



**II.** Excerpted from Sarah Rigg, Staff Writer, “Michigan Author Writes Travel Books for Young Tourists,” *The View*, Vol. 17, No. 27, July 8, 1999. Belleville. Leigh Arrathoon wants children all over Michigan to know what a magical state they live in.

The Michigan native and her co-author and illustrators have created a series called “Jody’s Michigan Adventures,” which stars a loving family and a magical stuffed mouse named Jody.

Arrathoon, who is from Rochester, conceived the series with John Davio, a Michigan native who lives in Imlay City.

“For many years I wrote and John published *The South Hill Gazette*, a little newspaper that was distributed throughout southeast Michigan.”

Arrathoon wrote a short story every week for that publication.

Davio had the vision for a lively travel book series suitable for children. The travel information would be included in a narrative about a close, loving middle-class family, the Murphys.

The illustrations in the books are “like post cards to remind the reader of the places he or she had visited,” Arrathoon said.

The various illustrators who have worked on the series, Jeanne M[orris], Ken Hajdyla, and colorist Mary Ann Strong, are all Michiganders, like the author.

The Murphy family consists of parents Mary and Mike Murphy and children Katie and Kevin.

Kevin narrates the books, but it’s his little sister, Katie’s, magical stuffed mouse, Jody, that steals many of the scenes.

The current series includes trips to Greenfield Village, Mackinac Island, the Upper Peninsula, the northwest section of the state and the cities of Holland, Frankenmuth and Detroit.

In each place the family stops, Katie’s father buys her a souvenir stuffed animal to remind her of their travels . . .

Arrathoon said she designed the series “so that any child from the fourth grade on could read them [sic] to himself.” She said younger children will like to have the books read to them.

“I don’t think enough people realize how much a child gets out of being read to,” Arrathoon said.

The plot of the Greenfield Village books illustrates the flavor of the series.

Katie and Kevin’s cousin, Elliot, is visiting for the summer. Elliot is a budding scientist who builds a Wright glider.

The children visit Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. Elliot is enthralled with the inventions of Henry Ford and the Wright brothers.

Katie’s friend, Jihan, is along for the trip, and she explores her African American history by visiting the Hermitage slave houses and learning about George Washington Carver . . . Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at [leigharrathoon@gmail.com](mailto:leigharrathoon@gmail.com).







**III.** Ginny Stolicker, “Travel Books not Just for Kids,” *The Oakland Press*, 1999.

If there are kids in your car this summer, one of your best bets for traveling is the *Jody’s Michigan Adventures* books. There are seven books in the series, each with special stories about - of course - Michigan.

Young readers can join Jody for the trip.

Jody, you see, is a magical mouse toy, fashioned by the Wizard of Paint Creek. Yes, it’s Paint Creek Press in Rochester that produces these great little books with the help of Leigh Arrathoon, who wrote the stories that were illustrated by Kenneth M. Hajdyla and Jeanne L. Morris. Mary Anne Strong colored all the pictures . . .

They were written for children, but adults will find some fascinating reading as they follow Jody, who travels everywhere with young Katie Murphy, her brother, Kevin, and their parents, Mike and Mary Murphy. Not to be forgotten is Mich, the turtle, who’s also along for the ride.

While the stories are fun for children to read, there’s also a lot to be learned and remembered. Tucked away in the storylines, for instance, are new words in bold face, definitions, and historical facts about the state.

Katie, one of the lead characters, is a bright little girl.

In one of the books when she’s talking about the Mackinac Bridge, she says, “It’s the world’s longest suspension (hanging) bridge. I guess it goes on for over 4 miles.”

Then Mich the turtle shares his knowledge.

“It (the bridge) spans (crosses) the 5-mile wide strait between Mackinaw City and St. Ignace. It has 41,000 miles of wire in its main cables, which weigh 11,840 tons,” he says.

Now that turtle has done his research with help from the author of these children’s books. The stories, the illustrations, the information and the “coloring” deserve an A-plus.

The readers follow the family as they enjoy experiences in Mackinac Island, Frankenmuth, the Upper Peninsula, Holland, Detroit, northwest Michigan and Greenfield Village.

This “holder friendly” collection is for reading at home and on the road. The books would also be great to read again after returning from vacation.

The author and illustrators put Michigan on the map for great vacations. Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at [leigharrathoon@gmail.com](mailto:leigharrathoon@gmail.com).





Murphy. She makes  
the computer  
favorite toy.

Christmas, and  
feature was  
Dutch toy  
my best  
heart.  
German

I said.  
glowed

zi. "If  
now,  
our



**IV.** “Michigan Family Adventure Books,” The Frankenmuth News, July 28, 1999.

Leigh A. Arrathoon, a French and English teacher, has written a series of children’s books entitled “Jody’s Michigan Adventure[s].”

The Great Places in Michigan books will be introduced by Arrathoon at the American Assn. United Women Art Fair in Zehnder Park on Aug. 7-8 and again on Nov. 20 at the Frankenmuth High School Arts and Crafts show.

The Michigan series of seven books with bright colored jackets and photos identifying the region covered by the author are Michigan’s Frankenmuth - Upper Peninsula, Holland, Mackinac Island, Greenfield Village, Detroit and Northwest.

The 5 x 7 books are a quarter-inch thick and filled with easy-to-read delightful stories about the Murphy Family and their pets [sic]. Each title has 48 pages (24 with reading material and 24 with full-color illustrations). The plots are intriguing as well as fun and also reveal geography, American history (especially Indian, European and black), legends, language and customs.

The star of each book is Jody, a magical toy mouse. In the Frankenmuth adventure, the Murphy children, Katie and Kevin, learn about the history of the Bavarian settlers and the Indians. They visit Bronner’s CHRISTmas Wonderland, where Katie loses her toy mouse but finds another friend, Schatzi, a toy raccoon. When Jody and Katie are reunited, Schatzi becomes part of the family.

The colorful illustrations in the Frankenmuth book by Jeanne Morris and Kenneth Hajdyla, with coloring by Mary Anne Strong, depict Bronner’s, the glockenspiel at the Bavarian Inn, the onion tower at the Lodge, Zehnder’s front porch, Fantasy Carriage, The Frankenmuth Mill and General Store, Frankenmuth Fudge Kitchen, the Riverqueen paddle boat, Village Store and the interaction of the Murphy children and their pet [sic] friends. The Village store is depicted on the front cover.

Arrathoon said the books were designed so any child from the fourth grade on could read them and younger children would enjoy having them read aloud. So far, 3,000 books have been sold to Michigan schools [100,000 books had been sold by 2010]. Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at leigharrathoon@gmail.com.







V. Frank Provenzano, Staff Writer, "History with a Twist of Disney and Dash of Lewis Carroll, *Hometown Communications*, 1999.

This mouse is neither mighty nor the object of affection for a fan club of members wearing god-awful hats with silly ears.

Like the times in which he was created, Jody the Mouse is a 1990s-styled down-to-earth androgynous human-looking rodent with a penchant for adventurous travel throughout the Great Lakes state.

Jody is the creation of Leigh Arrathoon, the author of a seven-booklet series, entitled "Great Places: Jody's Michigan Adventures," first published by Paint Creek Press of Rochester [soon available from Archus Press in electronic form].

The pocket-sized books - targeted at fourth-grade reading level - combine historical facts woven tightly into stories about Jody's spirited travels to Greenfield Village, Detroit, Holland, Frankenmuth, Mackinac Island, the Upper Peninsula and northwest Michigan.

The books were planned as a supplement to the state-mandated fourth-grade Michigan history curriculum. More than 3,000 copies of the series were sold to public school districts in the first month of printing. Another several thousand have been sent to local bookstores, including Borders and Barnes and Noble [and over 100,000 have been sold by 2010].

John Davio, of Imlay City, conceived the idea [of] the manuscript drafted by Arrathoon, a freelance writer, who holds a doctorate in French medieval literature. The former Catholic School language teacher teaches French and English to corporate executives.

"Great Places" is anything but academic, dryly empirical or a recitation of names and dates.

"If you say to a child, 'You're going to hear about history,' their response is 'Auughh.'" said Arrathoon, who lives in Rochester . . .

After years in academic studies, Arrathoon said she now suffers from the "disease of writing" and has no plans to publish another academic paper.

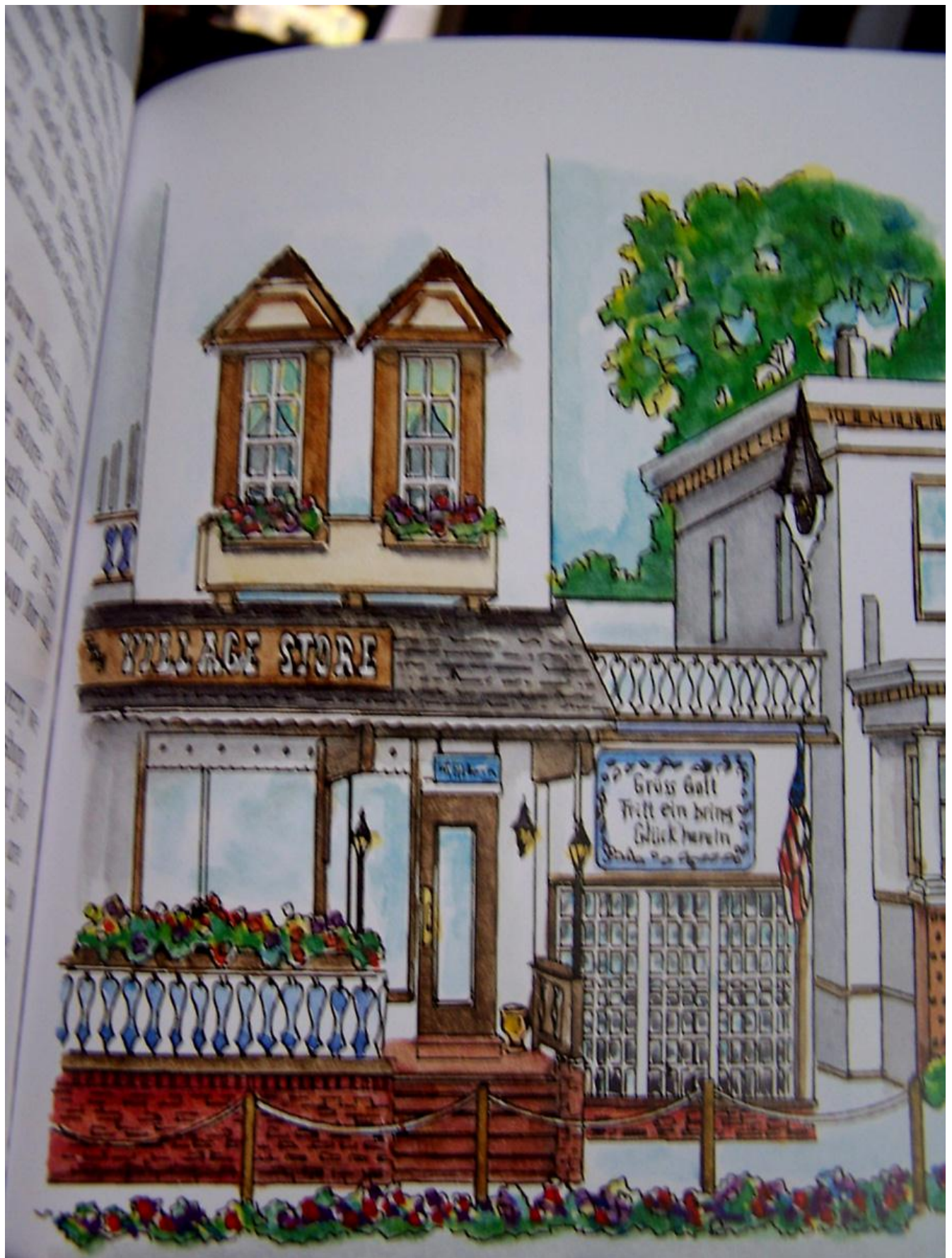
Arrathoon's other published writing includes essays on medieval poetics and the influence of Chaucer on the craft of fiction. Her dissertation at Princeton University was on an obscure 13<sup>th</sup>-century poem written by an unknown author.

Since early this year, she's been writing and sending short stories to national publications. Although she has yet to have her stories accepted or published, Arrathoon has received encouraging responses from "Esquire" and other notable magazines to keep her writing . . .

Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at leigharrathoon@gmail.com.







VI. "Books Give Kids a Look at Great Places," *Troy-Somerset Gazette*, July 26, 1999.

### **Doing Summer . . .**

Before you head off to explore Michigan this summer, you might want to invest in a set of new books. Written by English and French teacher, Leigh Arrathoon of Rochester, the books are both a great way to learn more about Michigan's favorite spots to visit, and to keep your child's reading skills in shape for all.

"When I wrote these books about Michigan, I designed them so that any child from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade on could read them to himself. A younger child would certainly enjoy having them read to him," Arrathoon notes.

"Because I'm a teacher," she adds, "I also began thinking about a summer reading program. Children tend to forget absolutely everything over the summer (which takes a lot of patience on the teacher's part). Kids who are good at reading, read all the time."

Summer is a great time to relax with a good book.

Reading will open many worlds to your child. And these books will open the world of Michigan to the entire family.

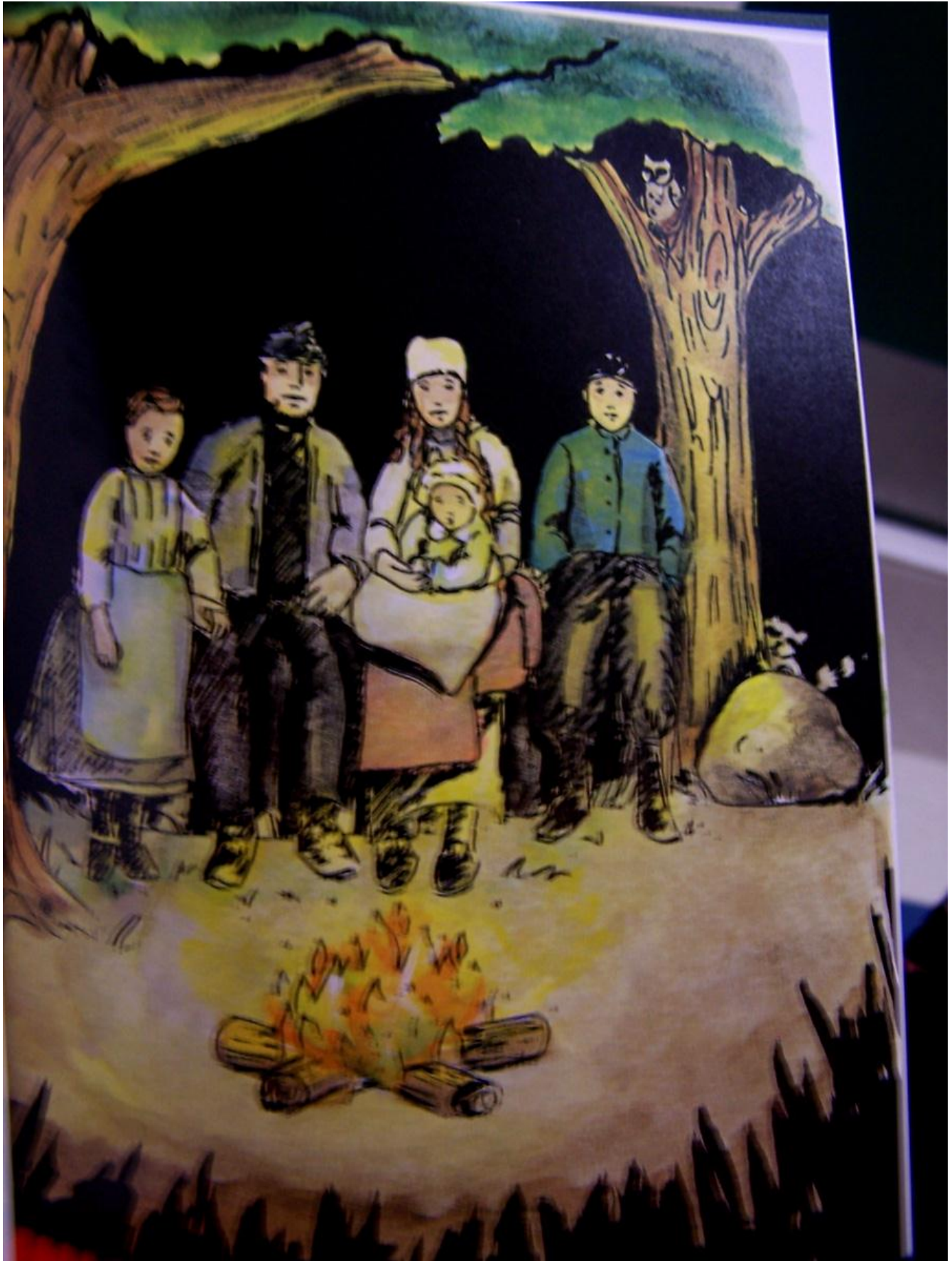
This new series, called "Jody's Michigan Adventure" books, is laden with information. Each book explores the geography and native people of the area, especially the American Indian, European and black history, legends, language and customs.

The books cover Mackinac Island, Frankenmuth, Detroit, Holland, the Upper Peninsula, the Great Northwest, and Greenfield Village.

In Mackinac Island, for example, Katie Murphy - our heroine - and her family vacation on the island, but it's her frog, Mich, who has the adventures your family just might want to repeat - at least some of them. Mich goes for a swim in the straits, tumbles into the fudge, and is lost at Arch Rock. Her brother Kevin will enlighten you about Alexis St. Martin, the voyageur, who was shot in the stomach and cared for by Dr. Beaumont. Kevin also relates the history of the great Indian war, when Chief Pontiac led the Indians against the British.

If you want to follow the Murphy family adventures all summer long, the books will be available from Archus Press, in electronic form. Call 248 218-0356 for further information, or write to the author, Leigh Arrathoon, at [leigharrathoon@gmail.com](mailto:leigharrathoon@gmail.com).





VII. Renay Scott, *The Michigan Historical Review*, May 2002, p. 127.

Leigh Arrathoon. *Jody's Michigan Adventures*. Rochester, Mich.: Archus Press.

The Jody's Michigan Adventures series, written by Leigh Arrathoon, chronicles the Michigan vacations of the Murphy family. The series includes seven brief stories (each one offers twenty-four pages of text, with twenty-four pages of illustrations) that read like a family's scrapbook of visits to Holland, Northwest Michigan, Mackinac Island, the Upper Peninsula, Frankenmuth, Detroit, and Greenfield Village. Katie Murphy, the seven-year-old daughter of Mike and Mary Murphy, tells her recollections of the family's vacations. Katie's imaginative stories, recorded by her eleven-year-old brother Kevin on his computer, relate the adventures of her stuffed mouse Jody, one of the many stuffed animals that Katie acquires throughout her travels in Michigan. Jody, a Dutch stuffed mouse, joined the Murphy family while they were visiting Holland, Michigan. From that point on Jody, who understands and speaks all languages, became the family's guide throughout Michigan.

Children will identify with the adventures of this Michigan family. Each adventure includes one of Kevin's editorials that claims to "set the record straight." Katie's accounts are often told through the eyes of Jody, and they differ from Kevin's. His recollections of the precocious seven-year-old Katie include tales of her misadventures, such as falling into a pond in Holland, getting lost in Ludington while tracking a fox, and wandering off on horseback on Mackinac Island. Kevin, claiming that he wants to be a historian, intersperses within his vacation narratives brief historic accounts of the early founders of Holland and Frankenmuth, the French influence in Mackinac, the Odawa Indians in the Northwest, and the founding families of the automobile industry in Detroit. Kevin's historical forays highlight the diversity of Michigan's story while the brevity of these asides avoids a distraction from the plot.

To round out the "family album," the narratives include detailed descriptions of popular Michigan tourist destinations. The Murphys visit such mainstays as Holland's tulip festival, Bronner's Christmas store in Frankenmuth, Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, the Soo Locks, the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, and Fort Mackinac. The rich details of these destinations are enhanced by colorful, realistic illustrations. For readers familiar with these places the descriptions and illustrations will spark their own vacation memories. For others such detail will highlight the settings where Jody, Katie, (and Kevin) experience their Michigan adventures.