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Mt. Arvon, not Curwood, highest point in Michigan

BY ROBERT R. FRENCH
Gazette correspondent

L'ANSE — Michael Brogan of Aura was excited over the recent news he had learned, and he wanted to tell his story to the first reporter he could find.

This fall, the summer field mapping project came to an end in Baraga County, and the personnel of the Mid-Continent Mapping Center (MCMC), working out of Baraga, were confident a new high point in the state had been identified.

For more than 20 years, Mt. Curwood had claimed honors as the highest point in the state of Michigan. It earned that recognition in 1963 when the Lions Club published the fact after a "Committee for Michigan's Highest Point," composed of chairman Eric Bourdo of the Ford Forestry Center, district conservation supervisor Robert Gouin, and district game manager Robert Rafferty declared it was indeed the highest point.

But now, Brogan has learned that Mt. Curwood is no longer the tallest peak in Michigan.

Mt. Arvon, about 14 miles due east of L'Anse is a fraction of a foot higher. It measures 1,979.238 feet, while Mt. Curwood measures 1,978.284 feet.

The point is in the southwest quarter of the 1954 Skanee 15' quadrangle in the SW ¼ sec. 2, T-50-N, R-31-W and is about 5½ miles northeast of the formerly recognized high point.

Early surveys had indicated Mt. Curwood and Mt. Arvon were close in maximum elevation.

District chief Ryan directed his men that third-order levels be run to the top of each mountain to positively determine which was the true high point in the state and its correct elevation be

cast in a bench mark.

Don King, Chuck Nankervis and Jack Fish ran the line for Mt. Curwood; Dave Burgeson, Nankervis and John Bennett the levels to Mt. Arvon. When all of the computations were finished, Mt. Arvon scored high.

Fred Krueger of MCMC, U.S. Geological Survey, Rolla, Mo., when told about the new readings, warned, "We must be aware that these locations are not absolute. As mapping activities increase and through use of better equipment and methods, it is entirely possible that still higher locations may be found in Michigan."

But until then a new high point exists — Mt. Arvon.

Ron Payne, in "Topographically Speaking," Geological Survey, National Mapping Division, Oct.-Nov.-Dec., 1982, Vol. 6, No. 1, Page 6, describes both Mt. Curwood and Mt. Arvon as being in remote areas, densely timbered country that does not allow a sweeping panoramic view of the countryside.

In fact, he states, present access is over abandoned logging trails which require four-wheel drive equipment and a large measure of determination to traverse, and the top of Mt. Arvon is a lonely spot.

Mt. Curwood was named in honor of Baraga County's most prolific writer, James Oliver Curwood, who spent much of his time in the Skanee area of the Huron Mountains.

Jim Leatherby had a camp next to Curwood's camp. It was located about half-way between the West Branch of the Huron River and Robarge's Creek. The two men were good friends.

Leatherby died nine years after Curwood in 1936. Another good friend of

Curwood's was Rex Erickson, who lived in Skanee and worked for Curwood when he came to Skanee and visited the Hurons.

Curwood wrote a book, "The Gentleman of Courage," about Erickson. Mrs. Bernice Grossbeck, of Coleman, a niece of Erickson, provided much of the information on Curwood, though she had never met him in person.

If interest compels, one may step inside the Skanee home of Curwood by visiting the L'Anse Township park, (approximately two miles north of L'Anse on the Skanee Road) aptly named "Curwood Park." The building was moved there from the Huron Mountain location.

Claims Mount Curwood higher

To the Editor:

It was with great interest that I read the article on Michigan's high point in the Thursday edition of the Gazette.

Your readers may be interested in the following item.

During 1963, myself and three other persons undertook a rather extensive level survey of Mt. Curwood and Mt. Arvon. We not only checked the elevations of these two areas, but others in the area as well.

We found the actual elevations are as follows: Mt. Curwood — 1,993.76 feet; Mt. Arvon — 1,979.69 feet.

These elevations were arrived at using standard spirit leveling methods, and shows that Mt. Curwood is the higher by 14.07 feet.

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L'Anse