

People

Margaret Smoke {1787 – 1885}
aka “Old Mother Smoke”

Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan

MARGARET SMOKE
aka "Old Mother Smoke"

The Petoskey Record
Wednesday, January 2, 1895

Mother Smoke Dead.

At one o'clock Monday Margaret Smoke, long familiar to all the people of Emmet and Charlevoix counties, and many summer visitors as "Old Mother Smoke," died of paralysis. Up to Dec. 24th she had been in usual health, but was then struck with apoplexy. Mother Smoke was the daughter of an Ottawa mother and an Englishman named Granger, and he was the first English trader at what is now Chicago. She claimed to be 103 years of age, and lived as a girl of ten or eleven years on Mackinac Island when it was garrisoned by British soldiers. She has lived for over fifty years about six miles west of Petoskey near Bay-shore, and was a devout Catholic. She will be buried from St. Francis church today.



"Old Mother Smoke" {1787 - 1885}

Usually she was seen with her clay or corncob pipe, lived on the Bear River near the Hankey Dam west of Michigan Street and may have also lived near Bay Shore at one time

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Extracted, "Petoskey and Bay View  
In Ye Olden Days

Original publication 1938 by Floy Irene Graham.  
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**Excerpt, page 17.....**

Old Mother Smoke, one of the interesting Indian characters of the early days, derived her name from the fact that she was never seen without a broken stemmed clay pipe in her mouth. She was very gay and funny, was always seen at all celebrations and had quite a talent for finding out about everything that went on in the community. She found out that there were some red-headed babies in one home in Petoskey and as she had never seen any, she went to the house, walked up on the porch and peeked in the window. The mother was frightened at first, but later became used to seeing Mother Smoke and some times three or four other squaws at her window trying their best to get a glimpse of the red-headed babies.

## OLD MOTHER SMOKE

Articles written by Petoskey Public School Students  
Printed in book titled "Many Moons" in 1952

### TALES OF OLD MOTHER SMOKE

#### "BAR"

It was early in the fall when the men were getting their guns cleaned and oiled to take their annual trip to the hunting grounds out on the south side of Crooked Lake. Their camp was nestled in a maple grove, and inside there were a table, a huge fireplace, and three straight chairs. Eli was the founder of the camp and also the first one into the woods. This year Eli's son, Jacob, was old enough to go hunting, so he and his dad went together.

It was a bright crisp morning with two inches of snow on the ground. The sun was just creeping over the horizon when Eli and Jacob slipped noiselessly out the door. They pulled the squirrels out of their hair, slowly kicked the rabbits off the stoop, and continued on their journey.

They walked for a long time until they came to their site where they would watch for "Slewfoot," the largest bear that they had ever seen in that part of the woods. Jacob and Eli built a small hideout out of the brush. Slewfoot was supposed to come down the old trail to their left. Their traps had been set early the evening before. They sat beside the small fire that they had built, told hunting stories, and waited patiently. Jacob, for some reason, was getting a little uneasy. Eli noticed it, but

Illustration-  
Melvin Wilson  
Grade 7

**OLD MOTHER SMOKE**  
*Articles written by Petoskey Public School Students*  
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ignored him because when a boy goes hunting with Dad for the first time, some mysterious things happen to him.

Time went on, and Jacob was hoping that his dad would mention eating dinner. Just then they heard cracking and snapping sounds in the brush nearby. Jacob tried to look and act very manly; but, for a twelve year old boy, it was mighty hard. Each held his breath, and steadied his gun in a shooting position.

About thirty seconds later, who should appear but Old Mother Smoke with a corn cob pipe dangling from her mouth, rambling down Slewfoot's path. Her gun was thrown over her shoulder. Eli was stunned; he couldn't do anything but stare at the old squaw. Jacob whispered something to his father and they both laughed. Mother Smoke did not yet know that there was anyone around, so she very foolishly started to sing and blow smoke rings. She looked as though she were entertaining someone.

Eli poked Jacob and told him to go out and tell her kindly to quiet down a little.

Mother Smoke snickered, and said: "Boys, you're just the people I wanted to see 'bout now. I kilt a bar up the trail a ways, and was hoping to meet somebody to help me carry it back to town."

Eli looked at Jacob for a long time, and then spoke: "Woman, if you give us the hide off that old good-for-nothing bar, we'll haul it right to town for ya'." Mother Smoke explained that the meat was all that she wanted anyway, so Eli and Jacob carried the "good-for-nothing" bear right to her doorstep for her.

Before Jacob and Eli got back to the camp, Jacob said as he pointed to a limb in a nearby tree: "Dad, see that limb up there?"

Eli nodded. "If I saw old Slewfoot a comin' down that trail now, I might not hit that limb goin' up, but sure as I'm Jacob Spears, I'd hit her comin' down!"

Eli laughed heartily, and he and his son strolled into the cabin together.

---Marian Crawford  
Grade 11

A STORY OF OLD MOTHER SMOKE

Jessie Lee, her parents, and two brothers came to early Petoskey from New York. Her only playmates were the Indian children who told many stories of Old Mother Smoke turning enemies into bears or other animals.

## OLD MOTHER SMOKE

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One day Jessies father and brothers went to the village and left Jessie alone. An hour after they left she heard a noise. Tiptoeing to the door she saw an old Indian woman coming to the house. She had seen her before; it was Old Mother Smoke. Soon she was at the door and instead of knocking, she came right in. Jessie was frightened but offered her a seat.

Mother Smoke said she wanted an ember for her pipe. Jessie carefully hunted for an ember that was just right. She was afraid if it was not bright enough, she might be turned into a bear. Old Mother Smoke lighted her pipe and without saying a word, slowly walked out.

--Lowell Kosloskey  
Grade 7

Old Mother Smoke could always be found wearing a shawl and a pipe in her mouth. She was a very gay person, and scattered all the news she could find. She was an interesting person and took part in every celebration. She wrote a good hand. When she wrote letters she was very particular about the envelopes she used.

--Donna Dunshee  
Grade 12

Tales of Old Mother Smoke  
Long ago there was an old  
lady her name was old  
Mother Smoke. She was an  
Indian lady. She used to  
peek in the window to see  
the red headed babies

Janet Cheadle  
First Grade

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aka "Old Mother Smoke"

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