

# Cryptids and Historical Memory: The Asserted Antecedents of the Michigan Dogman

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Attention to cryptids has in recent decades become prominent in the popular culture of the United States, and indeed the world. “Cryptid” refers to species whose existence is suspected but yet remains unconfirmed, as “cryptozoology” is the study of such species. The link to popular culture lies in a sharper sense that such animals possess, in the words of the pioneering cryptozoologist Behard Heuvelman, traits that are “truly singular, unexpected, paradoxical, striking, emotionally upsetting, and thus capable of mythification.” Creatures, that is, that tend toward the monstrous, such as Bigfoot or Chupacabra (Loxton and Prothero xi; Dendle 192).

There has been extensive contemporary discussion of cryptids, in the form of books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and guidebooks, as well as commentary on television and radio programs, newspapers, websites, and podcasts (Dendle 190). The bulk of this has been of a grassroots, layman, or commercial variety, with relatively little (and little welcomed) input from institutional scholars or trained experts. In a situation where there is much speculation but little evidence there can be both fascination and freedom, but also challenges to academically rigorous examination. This discussion seeks ways to confront that challenge.

How are we to study this subject? Consideration of cryptids has generally focused on identified elements such as physical characteristics, behavior, and location. Our focus will be upon a less prominent aspect: asserted origin and history. Descriptions of cryptid provenance are often insubstantial, as befits a topic likely both mythic and unreal. But recognition of background does exist, and is to an extent necessary in any presentation of the species as authentic. Examining such information offers one avenue to better understanding how knowledge of cryptids has arisen and been embraced in American popular culture.

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This discussion starts with the premise that cryptids are not actual animals, but rather a kind of idea. This was a notion that at some point coalesced or was created, then was subsequently developed, as a local and informal kind of folklore, an aspect of popular culture communicated widely, or even a “folkloresque” fashioning that flexibly mimicked older folklore. Cryptids, that is, have a discursive existence, one that can be traced from the point that discussion of them began. In their study, one might ask (as a cultural historian would) where or why that discourse started, how it formed, and to what it has connected.

The specific cryptid addressed here is the Michigan Dogman. According to accounts, this being appears much like a werewolf, tall and hairy, with a man’s body and a dog’s head, often (but not exclusively) seen near northern Michigan’s vast Huron-Manistee National Forest. Its asserted antecedents extend back to pre-colonial times, with reports of sightings since the late nineteenth century. Stories of the Michigan Dogman in history, however, are belayed by indication that the cryptid was created almost whole cloth in 1987. That is, this is not traditional folklore, but rather a new invention with the form and feel of older tales. The “legend,” once introduced, was nonetheless embraced, elaborated, and transmitted, taking on a life of its own. In this way, Dogman became not just another popularly-discussed modern cryptid, but also a new expression of genuine local folklore.

This essay specifically explores how Michigan Dogman discussion developed, and even fabricated, components of the cryptid’s history and provenance. As will be seen, there is virtually no physical or documentary evidence of the Michigan Dogman prior to 1987. An imputed past has, rather, been fashioned from Native American legend, a story of first contact, and later eyewitness accounts. This has been perhaps superficially compelling, inserting the cryptid into a vision of the state’s bygone days, linked to Michigan’s larger historical memory and identity. There are, however, substantial problems with how the sources utilized have been made to serve as both a historical record and validation of the dogman as an entity.

### “The Legend”

Before reviewing the manner that the history of the Michigan Dogman has been posed in popular discussions, attention must be paid to what, it seems, are the actual origins of this cryptid legend. Notable is the song “The Legend,” aired for

the first time by the radio station WTCM-FM in Traverse City, Michigan on April 1, 1987. This song begins:

A cool summer morning in early June, is when the legend began, at a nameless logging camp in Wexford County, where the Manistee River ran. Eleven lumberjacks near the Garland swamp found an animal they thought was a dog. In a playful mood they chased it around till it ran inside a hollow log. A logger named Johnson grabbed him a stick and poked around inside. Then the thing let out an unearthly scream and came out and stood upright (“Dauthrt”).

The lyrics go on to discuss a series of encounters with the “Dogman,” a creature later elaborated as being about seven feet tall, with a furry human body, dog’s head, and blue or yellow eyes of a malevolent cast, possessing a high screeching human-like voice. According to stories, it appears on the seventh year of each decade to harass hapless rural Michigan residents.

As the creator of this song, Steve Cook, states, it was all intended as an April Fool’s Day joke. “I had never heard of anything called the Dogman before I wrote the song...So I decided it was time to create a creature that was unique to Northern Michigan” (Sands; “Q and A”). While perhaps inspired by local stories, the Michigan Dogman tale was a wholesale fabrication to boost station ratings, presented in the nature of a Halloween story.

By Cook’s admission, this was not folklore, but rather akin to what Micheal Foster and Jeffery Tolbert term the “folkloresque” (4-5). As a cultural creation, it posed forms, figures, and images that resembled Michigan’s old stories and legends, but without actually being bound to any particular tradition. Intended to be locally resonant, it was also explicitly designed, as a recorded and repeatedly-played song, for commodification and mass appeal. This was an arrangement that established a cultural space for Dogman, as well as blurred the line between the local legends and popular cryptid discussion that subsequently emerged. Both, it seems, could grow from Cook’s foundation, as well as be mutually nourishing.

The song had an immediate impact. People began calling the radio station to hear it again. Some of them claimed to have seen or had prior contact with the Dogman, or knew others that had. In time, Cook claims, over five hundred people reached out to him with their stories, some of which he found credible. “It is amazing,” he observes, “how quickly one song was able to create the creature and how seriously it has been considered in the years since” (Hudson).

The “legend” of Dogman has gained attention, if in a marginal, largely non-mainstream fashion, and more on a regional than national level. Tales of the creature were elaborated as local legend, arguably developing into genuine folklore. In a manner commensurate with expanding interest in cryptids more broadly in American and global culture over the past few decades, Dogman has also grown as a popular culture phenomenon. This is evidenced by, among other results, newspaper reports (among which, fairly recently, of a trucker shooting Dogman in the face), television program reporting (such as *Monster Quest*), radio reports, podcasts, websites, books, and web chatter, as well as fictionalized accounts in movies and novels (Mulka; Sands; Holes). Attention has broadened over time with, for instance, new Dogman stories, word of mouth accounts, or new traditions of listening to “The Legend” before Michigan hunting trips (Fallon). Cryptid stories have likewise become more complex, and even politicized, as seen in recent podcasts that claim the U.S. government started a dogman breeding program in 1952 and has used dogmen as elite soldiers, notably in Vietnam (“Cryptid Super Soldiers”; “Remote Viewing”). The Michigan Dogman has become conspicuous, comparable to cryptids associated with other U.S. regions, such as the West Virginia Mothman, South Carolina Lizardman, or Alaska Bigfoot.

### The Documentary Record

As suggested in “The Legend,” the Michigan Dogman has long been known, with a presence extending back decades or even centuries. The ways that entity’s past has been asserted, and the problems with such assertion, will be discussed. But first, attention might be given to “harder” evidence that would better corroborate both Dogman’s existence and historical presence.

In fact, stories of dogmen are prevalent in world history. In probably the finest book written about this cryptid, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, David Gordon White traces ancient accounts of “Cynocephali,” dogmen or dog-like creatures. References appear in Europe, India, China, and Central Asia, among other regions, noted in Herodotus’ *Historica*, Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, as well as China’s *Houhan shu* and *Shanghai jing*. This includes note of dogman monsters, dogman gods (such as Anubis), distant dogmen races and nations (such as the “Dog Jung”), and even a Christian dogman saint (Christopher) (26-71, 114-92). Viewing all this as part of the global history of ideas, White posits dogmen as “a

deeply embedded and powerful metaphor” in which the cryptids are “constructed as marginal groups that haunt the boundaries of human, civilized space” (xii, 1). Half human, half beast, the Dogman represents the reach of that “other world,” from beyond the map or within the forests, possessed of a supernatural, criminal, chaotic, or polluting influence. This cryptid, however, is not just a dark threat, or representation of a prejudiced and simplified “Other,” but also an “alter ego” that has allowed humanity to better define itself (1-15).

White’s insights are intriguing but, to an extent, limited for our purposes. We are not considering all dogmen stories, but rather looking at the specific legend of the *Michigan Dogman*, a purported beast of America’s Great Lakes region. If this animal existed, or was believed to have existed, then people would have taken note. And there almost certainly would have been some documentary record of it – particularly before 1987.

But little record seems to exist. In terms of physical or forensic evidence, almost nothing has come forth. The footprints offered are unconvincing. The “Gable Film,” which purports to show a video of Dogman in the 1970s was shown to be a hoax (Godfrey, *Michigan Dogman*, ii, 1,5). There has been no body, no hair, no bones, no spoor. Further, there is little sign of habitation, ecological impact due to diet or migration, or much of anything that should reasonably be present if this is a species existing within a natural ecosystem. To suggest that this absence may be due to a government cover-up, or that dogmen are supernatural or trans-dimensional entities, is also problematic as, similarly, there is scant evidence to support such possibilities.

Even as a legend or “idea,” there is little reference before 1987. To be sure, there have been historical reports of strange phenomena in Michigan, such as “ghost lights” or lake serpents (Bartholomew). But a review of Clarke Historical Library’s Digital Michigan Newspaper Database, as well as the Library of Congress’s Chronicling America Historic American Newspaper Database, extending back to 1770, reveal only limited awareness of “Dogman,” “Dog-Man,” or similar variants. The most frequent references are to characters in O. Henry’s 1881 short story “Ulysses and the Dogman” and H.G. Well’s 1914 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, as well as to men who looked like dogs, handled dogs, or were unusually vicious or cruel. Concerning our cryptid, there is nothing. Similarly, a review of collections of Michigan folklore published prior to 1987, including Richard Dorson’s seminal *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers*, have no mention (Littlejohn; Andrews and Steinman). Questioning of people who grew up in

Michigan, done over three months in the summer of 2023, was also inconclusive. There simply is no memory. As Rachel Clark of the Michigan History Center states, growing up in Lansing “I had never heard of Dogman,” although she had since learned the stories and suggests there might be recollection among residents further north (The Michigan).

This lack of documentary proof prior to 1987 is distinctive even for cryptids. In the cases of Sasquatch or Yeti, for example, legends draw from older stories of wild men, tribes, or animals recorded in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (Loxton and Prothero 34-3, 74-9). Such a gap presents a problem for establishing the authenticity of Dogman as a historical phenomenon, and has even caused complications for building fictional narratives. But it is instructive for our purposes, permitting us to more clearly discern the way that the Michigan Dogman has, as a construct at the turn of the twenty-first century, been positioned in the state’s historical memory.

## Native American Legends

So how then has the Michigan Dogman been asserted as a part of Michigan’s regional past? That is to say, how has the idea of this cryptid been developed since 1987 and introduced into the state’s popular recollection of earlier times? Notably, three approaches have been utilized, being perhaps superficially convincing but problematic in establishing a genuine historical presence.

The first, similar to assertions about the history of Bigfoot and Yeti, has been an association, or outright conflation, of the Dogman with the legends of indigenous peoples (Loxton and Prothero). It is suggested that native American groups such as the Ottawa or Ojibwa – themselves popular symbols of the antiquity of the Great Lakes region – have long known of Dogman and have their own tales that extend back into the distant past. In essence, long-standing American tropes of hoary or secret Indian wisdom are manipulated to pose connections and infer historicity.

There are complications. One is difficulty finding any such local native story that refers explicitly to the Michigan Dogman. Intimation that they exist, or that this is hidden knowledge, is not evidence. The recorded myths reviewed – say of the Thunderbird or Winabijou the Trickster – also seem quite different in character and function from modern day Dogman stories. Like traditional myths generally, they exist not just to entertain, but to teach lessons particular to that

culture, intended to help people understand the world and how to live properly within it (Dorson, *Bloodstoppers* 41-55).

Even when there are Native American tales of horrific beings that seem similar to the Dogman, and might be taken as reference to it, there are still concerns. The Great Lakes region has an array of old monster legends, such as of the Windago, Skinwalkers, Bearwalkers, and the Loup Garou. As Richard Dorson and others tell us, these were most often understood as witches and evil sorcerers with the ability to transform into wolves, bears, dogs, or floating lights. They have been portrayed as vicious, murderous, and sometimes cannibalistic, using their powers to curse, sicken, slay, or frighten. The Windago was in some instances also presented as a gluttonous disembodied spirit whose possession brought lust and madness, although at least one source speaks of it as being like a man, but taller, with a dog's tail, fangs, and howl. The Loup Garou, drawn from the beliefs of Finnish and French immigrants, was likewise seen as an evil shapeshifting warlock, although the term has sometimes indicated a kind of werewolf (Dorson, *Bloodstoppers*; Godfrey, *Real Wolfmen*, 220-32; Wood 56-7).

These are, however, distinct beings, drawn from distinct legends and stories, in their particulars arguably often quite different from the identified Dogman. The Windago, for instance, generally neither looked nor acted like the Dogman we know. The Bearwalkers and Skinwalkers could take dog form, but not *dogman* form (at least until some suggestion of this possibility was made after 1987). The Loup Garou might have been a man who became a werewolf, but there is little in the legends to suggest that the Michigan Dogman is a werewolf.

Legends are amorphous and malleable, to be sure. But to facilely conflate creatures of historical folklore, suggesting that they actually were Dogman and, because the stories exist, we can understand that Dogman existed and was known more distantly in the past, is questionable (Leon). Such use of historical information also exhibits a clear confirmation bias. Elements of those accounts able to support a possible presence of the Dogman cryptid are embraced, while other conflicting details are altered or simply ignored. Historical sources are thereby stripped of context and original meaning, serving as fodder with which to sustain a preconceived narrative, as well as impose a faulty sense of historic existence (Loxton and Prothero 32-3). Historians are assiduously taught to avoid such methods, largely because they work to support social memory or contemporary goals rather than establish the actual conditions present in past times. The approach seems, rather, akin to Richard Dorson's conception of

“fakelore,” as “a synthetic product claiming to be authentic oral tradition but actually tailored for mass edification” (Dorson, *Folklore*, 5).

### The 1887 Wexford Encounter

Another approach in the asserted origins of the Michigan Dogman is reference to an imputed 1887 encounter between the Dogman and lumberjacks in what is today part of the Manistee National Forest in West Michigan’s Wexford County. This story is noted at the beginning of the song “The Legend,” as in virtually every subsequent discussion of Dogman that mentions the cryptid’s history. In essence, the tale is that, at a time when Michigan was being settled in earnest, at the height of the timbering of that state’s vast old growth pine forests, a group of shanty boys found a strange dog. Chasing it into the hollow of a tree, the canine emerged, rose to its feet, screamed horrifically and fled into the wilderness (Smith; Boudreau).

The tale is intriguing. Corroborating David Gordon White’s analysis, this narrative poses the Michigan Dogman as liminal, positioned at the point of contact between ancient wilderness and the expansion of civilization. Here is a being unknown, perhaps unknowable, resonate of the darkness and dangers a savage “other world.” Contact with such mystery leaves the lumberjacks shaken and the beast itself still loose along the borderland.

But there are more specific elements in the story. The Dogman is here introduced in the context of Michigan’s late nineteenth century, during decades in which the forests were being systematically cut to the ground, with that lumber shipped out to fuel America’s urban growth and westward expansion. In the region’s historical memory, this is Michigan as the frontier, a romanticized era of “wild west” style pioneers, lumberjacks, timbering camps, and lumber barons, marked by coarseness but also a prosperity and newly-infused culture that would transform the state (Neithercut). By the late twentieth century, such selective remembrance had been directly linked to, and developed in, Michigan’s public education and tourist industry (Rypma; Wiles). It is a source from which Michiganians have drawn selectively to galvanize a common identity. The introduction of the Michigan Dogman into this discursive context effectively inserts it into a larger mythologized world already well-established, associating that cryptid not just with an ancient past, but a place then being tamed by a rowdy American civilization. Dogman amongst the lumberjacks makes a mythic sense,



and this account has become one more addition to the many other legends and tales of that time.

One might consider, moreover, how the story fits in the cultural context of America in 1987 and after, particularly in connection to the embrace of conservationism (Keiter; Nash). Recent understanding of cryptids, Peter Dendle argues, often frame these entities as having resisted human devastation. Study of them “serves to channel guilt over the decimation of species and destruction of the natural habitat,” as well as to “recapture a sense of mysticism and danger in a world now perceived as fully charged and over-explored” (190-200). In this respect, the resonance of the tale goes beyond Dogman as a symbol of the timeless forest, a mysterious being threatening “to encroach on the center’s limits,” or a part of Michigan’s fabled settlement days (White 9). The dogman in this story is a pitiful and bullied creature, taking refuge in the hollow of a timbered log, howling his resentment as Michigan’s primeval woodlands are obliterated. Such depiction suggests indeed an “alter ego” against which humanity might measure itself. But one less like a savage monster and more akin to, say, the Lorax of Dr. Seuss’s 1971 children’s story *The Lorax*. The Dogman’s presence speaks to the selfishness of ecological annihilation, the tragedy of its consequences, but also the resilience of the old world.

Once again, however, there is seemingly no record of this event having taken place or even being noted in early times. The many accounts of it do not provide citations or reference to an original source, or else simply make reference to other sources published after 1987. There is no *locus classicus*. Or, more precisely, the apparent *locus classicus* is the 1987 song “The Legend.” The result in the Dogman literature is essentially the creation of an echo chamber, with the discussions repeating one another, then posing that repetition as corroboration of the story and its proposed veracity. In this respect, the presentation of the Wexford encounter mirrors that of several other unsubstantiated historical encounters, such as a 1938 dog attack, also frequently referenced in discussions of the Dogman in Michigan history (Smith; Boudreau; Godfrey, *Michigan Dogman*, 14-18).

The story of the Wexford encounter is, however, intriguing in its relationship to folklore and popular culture. If in fact originating from “The Legend,” the tale provides a specific example of how the folkloresque can be shaped from a context of local tales, mythology, and contemporary concerns. Even more striking, it suggests an example of how folkloresque creation that is truly resonate, as clearly this was, can ground not just new popular culture discussion, but seemingly new

Michigan lore rooted in physical space. This is not a circumstance of local informal culture being antithetical to mass communication. In this instance, the two have clearly worked together, symbiotically, to flesh out a stronger vision of the Dogman.

### Anecdotes and Eyewitness Accounts

A third element of the asserted history of the Michigan Dogman is the use of personal anecdotes and eyewitness accounts. Many people have claimed to have seen the Dogman, or know of someone who has, or have heard tales that they consider credible. These sources, however, are also problematic as an acceptable record, although, in the means of their presentation, they often reinforce historical myths or associations.

Referenced in such testimony is a wide range of encounters. Dogman has been observed wandering the woods, eating animals, crossing roads, running with ordinary dogs or other dogmen, jumping from tree to tree, lazing by roadsides or waterways, stalking hunters or cars, eyeing rural residents, scratching doors, howling in the distance. The books about this cryptid offer long lists of anecdotes; at least one is made up entirely of them (Godfrey, *Michigan Dogman, Realwolfmen*; Leon; Lyon; Haggard). Such claimed sighting is often presented *ipso facto* as proof, generally offered with a “believe it if you want,” “come to your own conclusion,” or “where there is smoke there is fire” rhetoric (Haggard 3). The distinction made between the eye witness stories being true in the sense that sometime happened, and that *something* being, in fact, a genuine cryptid encounter is often ambiguously rendered.

A number of these anecdotes and personal stories extend their accounts into the past. This includes, among others, the story of a dog attack – or at least threat – during an ice fishing trip in 1938 (mentioned above), and of an unnamed security guard that, on night duty in the 1950s, saw a strange canine against a distant fence suddenly stand erect (Boudreau). Or, more strangely, of a traveling salesman meeting an upright, talking wolfman in a farmhouse in rural Detroit in the 1920s (Godfrey, *Monsters*, 53). That these encounters purportedly happened in the past, prior to 1987, corroborates the existence of the Dogman in history. The credibility of such assertion, however, is muddied by the fact that virtually all of these accounts came to light, or were released to the public eye, after 1987. Although a common response in this connection is that people were afraid to

come forward, as well as that, as some suggest, the United States government has suppressed knowledge, perhaps to better develop secret “dark state” military programs (Mulka; “Cryptid Super Soldiers”).

The nature of personal sightings of the Michigan Dogman, as presented directly or recounted by a third party, tend to follow a common narrative form. There is an unexpected encounter, an episode of menace by the cryptid, then withdrawal of the beast without definitive resolution. Most often, Dogman is associated with the forest or its ancient beasts, but always with a twist of mystery and the unknown. In the claimed 1938 story, for example, the fisherman Robert Fortney fired his gun to repel a pack of wild dogs, but “fear escalated to cold terror as the only dog that didn’t run off reared up on its hind legs and stared at Fortney with slanted, evil eyes and the hint of a grin” (*Real Wolfmen* 79). Or, in another story set in Iosco County, within the Huron National Forest, in the 1970s a hunter found himself being followed. When this stalker emerged, as the hunter stated, “it was like the forest opened up...it looked like a hole in the woods. It kind of absorbed all color and light, yet at the same time was not a shadow” (174).

A number of accounts are also explained in terms of native beliefs, practices or landmarks: the so-called “Native American Connection” (*I Know What I Saw*). As a narrative presentation, this is the inverse of the exploitation of legends discussed above, but draws a similar association with a mythic past. It includes contextualizing stories within an asserted indigenous understanding that beasts such as Dogman are shamanic shapeshifters (*Monsters* 117). One story, for instance, recounts a farm woman from Iosco County who was pursued by Dogman, but saved when she crosses the drawn line “from a Native American cleansing ceremony they had performed on their property” (*Real Wolfmen* 100). She “wondered whether the creature could have been a supernatural manifestation such as a skin walker, an animal-like creature that is said to be conjured by the ritual practices of some types of Native American medicine men” (101). Other encounter stories are framed in light of places purportedly lost to the past. After recounting three meetings with dogmen in 2016, near the Manistee National Forest, a man named “Brad” observed that “I was told by a family member that a lot of the wood acreage is Indian burial grounds.” The author then links that referenced region, and Dogman upon it, with “the tragic historic massacre of the area’s Potawatomi” (*I Know What I Saw* 87-8).

As Micheal Shermer points out in his article “Show Me the Body,” the core problem with such anecdotal accounts is that they are not reliable evidence, even

when there may be some truth to them. “Anecdotes do not make science. Ten anecdotes are no better than one, and a hundred anecdotes are no better than ten” (37). Or, as Daniel Loxton and Donald Prothero concur, eyewitness testimony is simply “insufficient” (13-6). People often remember incorrectly, incompletely, or disingenuously. Moreover, a prevalent confirmation bias, as is clearly evident among many who discuss cryptids, can shape accounts into certain predetermined, often invalid, shapes. Even when there is sincere belief in what one has personally experienced, or heard, it cannot necessarily be accepted as full confirmation. Further evidence is required to establish authenticity, if not belief. This difficulty was illustrated in recent U.S. politics, when challengers presented an array of personal depositions as evidence of interference in the 2020 presidential election. Although persuasive to many in the public sphere, a lack of corroboration made it unconvincing in legal court review. The result, in the case of the Dogman stories, seems little more than grist for what Richard Dorson termed “urban legends.”

### Concluding Remarks

The Michigan Dogman is a popular culture idea that has gained in scale and complexity over the past four decades. As a “metaphor,” the cryptid is consistent with David Gordon White’s analysis of dogmen more broadly, in the manner that it is portrayed as residing along liminal or civilizational boundaries, represents the threat of the mysterious unknown, and offers a contrast that allows society to evaluate itself. Since 1987, and the song “The Legend,” however, Dogman has been posited as a genuine entity with a distinct past. Given an absence of supporting physical or documentary evidence, a historical presence has been asserted through the use of Native American legends, a foundational story of encounter, and personal anecdotes and testimony. Although problematic as corroboration, the presentation has yet had an impact on historical memory, in effect injecting Dogman into a popular vision of Michigan’s past days. In contrast, the actual *history* of the Michigan Dogman, particularly as an idea present in discourse, emerged only from 1987, as the story of the cryptid was introduced, developed, and transmitted.

A few points might be made about that history. First, the Michigan Dogman legend, as it has evolved, is not just a scary story. The discursive positioning of the cryptid in relation to ancient wilderness, Native American lifeways or beliefs, the height of Great Lakes timbering, and well as subsequent forest contact, works

within a popular culture visualization of Michigan's past. The Dogman is a folk image not just of darkness and peril, but also of a mysterious world that once existed but now is largely gone forever. In a sense, it really is the *Michigan Dogman*, as the cryptid symbolizes that region, its secrets or potentialities, and by extension stands as a source of regional pride. That is to say, it has served, and continues to be made to serve, the purpose that Steve Cook originally intended. Indeed, it seems to have transcended Cook's ambitions in the way his "folkloresque" story created new, interwoven folklore and mass culture. That this legend may not jibe with actually historical conditions, of which many Michiganders are not fully aware, does little to discount its contemporary meaning or the manner that it links to, and even buttresses, romanticized historical memory.

Second, as seen in this case, attention to the past in framing Dogman has been integral to the form and interconnections of this modern discourse. Engaged is a common technique, selecting from former events to enliven a mythic narrative, as well as recasting old folk tales to provide corroborative detail. This shaping, or even fabrication, of historical information and stories has allowed discussion to be variously folkloresque, part of a new Michigan folklore, a subset of cryptid-centered popular culture, or even pseudoscience. In this service, distorted historicity compensates for a lack of corroboration or evidence, offering validation while being flexibly molded to accommodate different configurations. Indeed, it has enabled the interlocking, communication, and mutual reinforcement of related expressions. Urban legends can, for instance, be inserted into historical memory; historical memory can give substance to urban legends. In this commonality, new folklore has a largely fluid, and even symbiotic, relationship with popular culture.

Third, if the logic and evidence of the Michigan Dogman antecedents are not impressive to professional historians, the way in which those stories have been developed and transmitted should be. We see here an example of how knowledge, of and for ordinary people, was effectively invented, gathered from mutually-affirming sources, processed uncritically in support of specific preferred notions, then disseminated using evolving new technology – all done with a freedom, and on a scale, unprecedented in human history. It may be presented as secret lore of a mysterious hidden world, accessible most to those who can see it and really want to know it. But the process is in fact indicative of how

contemporary ideas, no matter how strange, have been shaped into forms seemingly real, as well as shared virtually anywhere, with anyone.

Finally, the perspectives and techniques discussed here are far from unique in contemporary America. In the embrace of Dogman, as other cryptids, we see not just an acceptance of fabricated or scientifically-unsupported notions, but also a rejection of elite knowledge and experts that monopolize “the pool of culturally acceptable beliefs” (Dendle 190, 200). This approach to knowledge has similarly incorporated distrust of government, acceptance of unvetted sources, bias in consideration of evidence, openness to conspiracy theories, and even embrace of the supernatural -- in all, a kind of iconoclastic magical thinking (200-1). Such a way of knowing has also been found, among many other places, in recent extremes of American political discourse. When for example Kristina Karamo, the former chair of Michigan’s Republican Party, noted for election denialism and opposition to vaccination, opined that “demonic possession is real,” that statement was based in a similar approach to, and transmission of, public knowledge (Danner). It may even have worked within a common, mutually reinforcing, milieu. This study of cryptids as an artifact of contemporary history – a recently-fashioned mythic idea, supported with distortions of history and folklore, enlivened through repetition and self-reference, aided by commodification, transmitted electronically -- is thus not just about cryptids. It also offers insight into the mechanism of a larger, and discernibly potent, perceptual shift in American culture.

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