Have you ever written a diary or a journal? Writing a diary when you take a trip or vacation can be fun and a good way to remember your trip afterward. Your diary would be called a "travel journal."

One way we can find out what it was like to travel in Michigan during settlement times is by reading Lansing B. Swan's travel journal. Swan, who lived in Rochester, New York, kept a journal – or diary – of his trip through southern Michigan so that he could share his experiences with his family when he returned home.

Swan sailed from Rochester on June 9, 1841, on the Steamship Madison, "the largest steamer on the lakes, extreme length 210 feet, breadth 52 1/2." He arrived in Detroit on June 12, a Saturday. He took a two-and-a-half hour railroad trip to Ypsilanti, then hired a wagon to take him to Ann Arbor where he arrived at 8:00 P.M. He left Ann Arbor on Monday to take a "stage 105 miles west to Kalamazoo." The following excerpts from his diary describe some of his travel experiences from Ann Arbor to Niles and during his return to Detroit.

Excerpts from

**JOURNAL OF A TRIP TO MICHIGAN IN 1841**

*Lansing B. Swan, 1809 – 1861*

*Published: George P. Humphrey, Rochester, NY, 1904*

Monday, June 14th.

Left Ann Arbor . . . at 12:30 o'clock by stage for Kalamazoo. Passed through the most beautiful country I ever saw, the ground all along the road richly ornamented with wild flowers and dotted with crimson by the thousand of strawberries which cover it everywhere, the road being entirely natural. Our driver with his post coach drove in the road or woods as he fancied, in fact you may ride through this country anywhere, through the forest with horses and carriage. We passed to-day a great number of natural meadows of hundreds of acres, never cultivated in the least. All that the farmer has to do is, when the grass is ready, send on his men and mow it down. This called in distinction from cultivated hay "wild hay" and the other "tame hay." Passing through a number of small villages in the woods we arrive at Jackson (a considerable place), just in time for tea with strawberries and cream. At this place is the states prison. It is but part finished, but the plan is one extensive enough, and does credit to the astonishing enterprise of this young state. After tea at Jackson we again take seat in the coach. . . . The night was very cold and damp and the road quite bad. After a very tedious ride arrived at Marshall at 5:00 o'clock in the morning.
Tuesday, 15th.

It is a beautiful place. . . . This place is to be the capitol of the state. After breakfast left Marshall and rode through a fine section of country, 34 miles, passing over one or two beautiful prairies, to Kalamazoo, where we arrived at 2:30 p.m. . . . I am now awaiting dinner and have sent over for Norris [Swan's brother-in-law].

4 o'clock p.m.

I have just shaken hands with Norris. . . . He . . . cannot leave now. I therefore hired a conveyance to his home. He resides on Genesee Prairie about five miles from the fine village of Kalamazoo. This village pleases me much, in fact I like its location and general appearance better than any I have before seen and one thing I remarked in particular, it is one of the few places where you will not see the pale and yellow faces peculiar to those suffering from fever and ague. . . .

Friday, 18th.

Left Norris's at 6:00 o'clock. He, having lost one of his fine span of horses, we are obliged to take his heavy ploughing team. We passed through a fine section of country to-day, traveling six or eight miles without seeing a house and passing through the most beautiful woods imaginable. It seems quite impossible for me to feel lonely in these woods for the resemblance is nearer that of a beautiful orchard than to a wilderness. As we jogged along to-day a fine large buck stood out from before us. He stopped a few rods off and looked at us as though he wished a further acquaintance. There being no decent tavern on the road H. [Harriet, Swan's sister] has brought our dinner and, as we stop to feed our horses we all ate with an excellent appetite. We were now detained in a rainstorm. I soon found that the detention was on my account, Norris and Harriet not minding the rain. We therefore drove on and got some wet. At Summerville, nine miles from Brooks, we were obliged to stop for the night. Got a tolerable supper and comfortably clean beds. Norris and Harriet having the only bed room below stairs, I was obliged to sleep up stairs with the "School Marm," she going to bed first and I having got up first. The interference was not felt as there was a short partition across the end where the bed was… We left here at 4 o'clock this morning, Saturday, 19th, and at about 7 we were in sight of Louisa's. . . . Here we are at Louisa's clean and nice log house enjoying each others society. Brooks has a splendid farm of 160 acres. . . . He is located three miles from the flourishing village of Niles on the border of a small prairie which is at the head of navigation on the St. Joseph River at the mouth of which steam boats from Buffalo to Chicago touch. . . I should have mentioned that the presents I brought were received with great pleasure.
Louisa has become reconciled to the loss of her furniture and is now very comfortable. . . . I leave for home to-morrow evening, and shall have in two nights 200 miles of traveling in reaching Detroit. . . .

Tuesday, 22d.

Left Niles at 1 o'clock and am now on the great turnpike from Detroit to Chicago. . . . At Mottville we crossed the St. Joseph. This is a fine river. I have forgotten to say anything about the wild flowers which adorn the woods and prairies. They are beautiful beyond anything that can be imagined. . . . We passed over to-day White Pigeon Prairie, near the center of which is the beautiful village of that name. The prairie contains about 8000 acres perfectly level and highly cultivated, in fact I think this spot excels any other I have seen. . . . At 6 o'clock arrived at the village of Cold Water. An excellent name this, but the bar room of a miserable hotel belies its name. Tea is getting ready and a poor one I am sure it will be. We have had 14 passengers in and on the coach to-day, and with the heat and dust this afternoon I am almost worn out. However, must hold out until to-morrow evening when I hope to reach Detroit, and get some sleep on board a steamboat. Oh, how I wish I was home! Must plod along all night instead of being in a comfortable bed. I was somewhat disappointed. We had a tolerable supper, and again on the road. A tedious night and a miserable breakfast this morning, Wednesday, the 23d, where I did not try to remember the name of the place. At 11 o'clock arrived at a very pretty village called Clinton. The roads as we passed along, carpeted with lillies [sic], roses, etc. 12 o'clock at Saline, ten miles brings us to Ypsilanti where we take cars for Detroit and as we are now about making the last stage I hope it will not bring us to the last stage for I am almost worn out. On my way out I left Ypsilanti the evening of the 12th, and have made my circuit traveling about 400 miles.