

A view of some of the lands in The interior of the Territory of Michigan

Messrs. Sheldon & Reed

An expedition was lately formed, as is known to you and the public, to explore some part of the interior of this Territory. We the undersigned, who composed that exploring party, having been solicited by many respectable citizens, to publish the results of our observations on the lands we have viewed during our excursion, have drawn up the following statement as well in compliance with their wishes as for the information of our friends abroad. As reports have been spread abroad unfavorable to the character of the soil, it was a principal object of the party to ascertain by their own observation how far those reports were founded on truth, that we might give satisfactory information to our friends and to emigrants. Very much, however, ought not to be expected from a tour performed in twelve days. To render this view more satisfactory we shall also introduce some information received from others. It may be a matter of surprised to persons abroad that so little has hitherto been known of this district of country. That fact is owing to several circumstances. The first settlers of the country are remarkable for their partiality to situations on large waters; and in no case do they depart from this choice, nor have they any disposition to explore lands otherwise situated. Again it is remarkable that along the Detroit River and some part of the great lakes where you leave the waters one or two miles you come into low lands which generally extend about three miles in breadth. Such a stripe of land is found in the rear of our city which has deterred many from going further back, and has made a very unfavorable impression respecting the whole country. The circumstances mentioned together with some others, have furnished interested and designing persons with their means of defaming the country and retarding its population, whilst the truth has been known to few, and still fewer felt any disposition to diffuse it. The Indian traders were almost the only persons who explored the country and they seldom paid any attention to its advantages as an abode for civilized people. And finally what has rendered it uninteresting to judicious emigrants, its lands have never til this summer been exposed for sale. But now that the country offers lands, rights and privileges to freemen, every friend of American prosperity must have a wish to become acquainted with its natural advantages. Its local situation is one, which presents very flattering prospects. It stretches along the great highway from the fur establishments in the N. West to the city of N. York-a course of navigation intercepted by not more than thirty miles of land carriage. The territory is in fact almost surrounded with waters navigable for the largest vessels and the communication with the Atlantic, the easiest of any part of the Western states, not bordering on the Atlantic affords. From this view of its local situation let us proceed to examine the interior of Michigan. That flat land in the rear of our city has been a barrier against explorers and which has been called a swamp, it is not a swamp, but is rich land, covered with large timbers and though in certain seasons it is wet, it is now perfectly dry. A good road can be made across it without any great expense, and at a distance of about twelve miles from this city you come upon white oak ridges affording excellent ground for roads. We are informed by respectable gentlemen who have come through from Chicago, a distance of more than 200 miles, that the ground through that whole course is chiefly elevated and dry. And from every credible source of information to which we have access, as well as from actual observation, this country, instead of being called marshy, ought rather to be called hilly.

Our course from this place was north westerly. We passed through 8 miles of land that is but little undulated, yet sufficiently so as to afford many good habitations for farmers. The soil is of a good quality, and everywhere sandy and remarkably loose. The timber is Sycamore, Ash, Sugar Maple, Lynn, Elm, Poplar, Ironwood, Beach, Hickory, and Oak, red and white. We there came into ridges of oak land interspersed with prairies covered thickly with high grass. In these prairies arises a branch of the Red Run. At about 10 miles we crossed a small stream of excellent clear water, which circumstances in this dry season proves it to be a permanent stream. The soil is good and will be excellent wheat land. It is thinly timbered with lofty white Oak. After passing through these lands about 4 miles further we came to another small branch of the Red Run, about which there are some fine bottoms. There we came into land considerably undulated, soil pretty good; timber Aspen, Oak, Maple, Sugar, Ash, Elm, Beach, Ironwood, Cherry, chiefly of small size. This was in Range 11, E. Township 1 [\[Royal Oak\]](#), Section 9, 6, 5, 4. In Section 6 we encamped and viewed the lands in the neighborhood. Here is another small branch of the red run. No water at present, but by digging one foot in the channel we got good water. The banks are elevated, stones sufficiently abundant for ordinary purposes. Some of the land would in the state of Ohio be considered first quality-more of it second. Upon the whole it will admit of excellent farms. We then proceeded west to the north branch of the river rouge, range 10, Township 1 [\[Southfield\]](#), north about 3 miles. The first part of this course was through land for the most part level, well timbered but near the Rouge the land is more variegated by oak ridges, of good soil, little underbrush, with rich bottoms. Indeed the land bordering on the Rouge, as far as we discovered, is all good, most of it first rate. The river passes through a rich veil about 15 rods wide and has, this dry season, a strong rapid current of pure water. The timber in this vicinity, besides those kinds mentioned in former places is, Walnut, Butternut, Shell Bark Hickory. A similar description, as we are credibly informed will answer the lands down the river Rouge, generally to a distance of 8 miles from its mouth. After passing this stream a mile and a half, and other smaller streams we change our course to the north, pass good land well timbered, one mile and a half, and cross a running brook then into ridgy oak land which exhibited a beautiful appearance. You can see generally the distance of a half a mile. The soil is red loam and will do well for wheat. It is covered with grass and other herbage. We then came to a cluster of lakes which are the sources of the Rouge and Huron rivers. As we knew of no names that they had hitherto received, we thought it expedient to give them some, and designated most of those we saw by the names of the explorers. Our course was northerly. Our first, lake Wing [\[same\]](#) is in section 29, township II, range 10 [\[Bloomfield\]](#), about 3 miles in circumference, the waters exceedingly pure, and the banks handsomely elevated. Northwesterly from lake Wing, about a half a mile is lake Sibley [\[Gilbert\]](#), principally in section 28, about a mile and a half in circumference, containing a small island, the lands

around it similar to those around lake Wing. To the north 2 miles is lake Stead [\[Island\]](#), one mile long and containing two small islands separated from lake M'Kinstry [\[Long Lake\]](#), two and a half miles long, by a narrow and high peninsula. The former, situated in sections 17 and 18 and latter in 7 and 8, township II, range 10. Southwesterly from the peninsula is lake Monteith [\[Walnut\]](#), about 4 miles in circumference, situated partly in section 18 [\[19\]](#), township II, range 10 and partly in township II, range 9 [\[West Bloomfield\]](#). Half a mile further northwesterly, leaving lake Canfield [\[Pine\]](#) to the right, is lake Macomb [\[Orchard\]](#), about 9 miles in circumference, situated in sections 10, 11, 14 and 15, township II, range 9, embracing an island of about 40 acres, on which are a number of productive apple trees. Westward of lake Macomb and connected with it is lake Catherine [\[Upper Straits\]](#).

The land amongst these lakes will generally answer the description of the last given. The water is pure and the bottom generally gravel. Well stored with a variety of fish; and the shores generally elevated and pleasant. After crossing the outlet from lake Macomb to lake Cass [\[same\]](#), which is situated principally in sections 2 and 3 of township I [\[II\]](#), range 9, and following an elevated ridge between these two lakes, we pass northwesterly through oak ridges and prairies to lake M'Dougall [\[Union\]](#), situated principally in section 6, same township and range.

Here we changed our course northeasterly and traversed alternately ridges and places of prairies, tamarack swamps, till we struck in section 33, township III, range 9 [\[Waterford\]](#), a river running into lake Cass - this river we named Audrain [\[Clinton\]](#) - it passes where we crossed it through an extensive and beautiful meadow, richly clothed with thick high grass. The river is at this place about 20 feet wide, and 18 inches deep, as clear as crystal, and passes over a bottom of siliceous pebbles, with a gentle current. From river Audrain we passed over high ridges of ground well timbered lands, and approached lake Elizabeth [\[same\]](#). Lying mostly in section 34 and 28, township III, range 9, then proceeding along the south shore of lake Elizabeth traversed a tract of excellent well timbered land between this lake and lake Cass. From lake Elizabeth, passed in a northwesterly direction over high rolling land, oak ridges and rich bottoms, timber Butternut, black Walnut and black Birch, and in section 26, crossed a stream connecting a small lake lying principally in the same section with lake Whitney, situated in sections 35 and 36, township II [\[III\]](#), range 9 from the eastern extremity of which issues the river Huron. The land on the north shore of lake Whitney [\[Otter & Sylvan\]](#), which we traversed is much the same quality as the last described. We crossed the Huron where it issues from lake Whitney and traveled it in all its windings for 12 miles til we arrived at the first settlement. In the whole of this distance and til within about 5 miles of the mouth it has a continued rapid current and yet it has in no place any considerable falls.

The land on both sides of the Huron as far as our observations extended, were generally elevated rolling ridges, and gradually inclining plains, thinly timbered with white and black oak, with here and there a tract of rich bottom the soil warm and sandy.

One circumstance respecting the lands on this river as well as much of the land on the lakes, deserves the consideration of emigrants. Many farms may be selected on which there will be from 50 to 100 acres of good upland where the plow may be put in immediately, & a good crop of wheat raised without any expense of clearing, except girdling of the trees. This we have seen demonstrated in several instances among the upper settlements on the Huron where the crops have been abundant and some of them now of the third year.

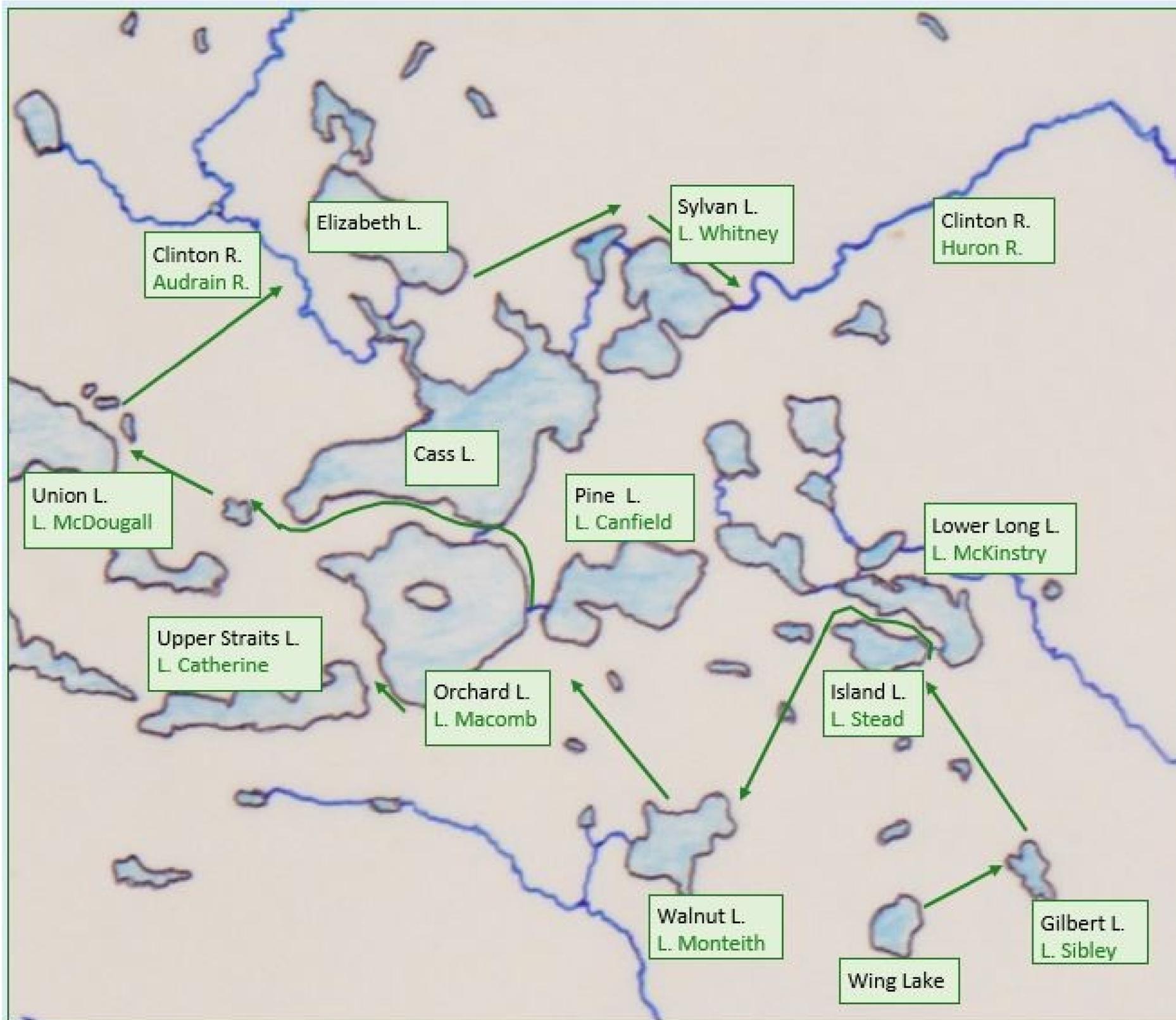
On the whole, with respect to the lands over which we traveled, and those generally within that distance from this place, it may be said that a very considerable proportion of them are excellent, that most of them are good and that the poorest section of them might be cultivated with profit. Good water is another important article and we are able to say that we found it in great abundance. This may be said generally of the waters of the territory. When you leave the slow water near the mouth of the river you find it excellent in the streams and in the lakes. It has been supposed that there is too little stone. This may be the case in some small districts, and there appear to be no rocky cliffs, but there is generally found on the ridge land a sufficiency of stone; as to seats for mills, there will be no want, one may be found in every neighborhood.

D.C. M'KINSTRY	B. STEAD
A. E. WING	J. MONTEITH
A.G. WHITNEY	

Detroit Gazette November 13, 1818

Transcription by John Marshall and Julie Garcia





Note:

The green arrows show the route the Explorers took as they went through what would become known as the “Lake Country” of northwest Oakland County.

In all they named 12 lakes (shown in green), but the names of only Wing, Cass and Elizabeth survive today.

The original names they gave to the two branches of today’s Clinton River are shown in green.

Map created by Bob Muller

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A sample from the original edition.
A complete transcription is inside.

