

# The 1818 Expedition and the Original Pontiac Plan

This T. 21 Oak Opening  
Rolling

6.

Resolved that the Town contemplated to be laid out by this association, be called "Pontiac".

Including a Brief Narrative of a Recent Exploring Party in the Territory of Michigan.

The Relation Between the Party and The Founding of the Settlement of Pontiac.

A Discussion of the Events Occurring Around This Time.



# Roll The Credits

In 2017 and 2018, some folks from some local historical societies got together to study an expedition into Oakland County undertaken in 1818.

While a number of people participated, the core group is:

Helen Jane Peters  
John Marshall  
Bob Muller  
Barbara Frye  
Dave Decker  
Sue Williams  
Neil Hepburn  
Pam Carmichael  
Michael Carmichael  
Jeff Love  
Dr. Richard Stamps  
...and others.

We are also grateful to these historical societies for loaning us their historians:

Bloomfield Township Historical Society  
Greater West Bloomfield Historical Society  
Royal Oak Historical Society  
Oakland County Pioneer and Historical Society  
Ferndale Historical Society  
Oakland County Historical Commission  
...and others.



## OCPHS

Barbara Frye, Ray Lucas – Research and assistance

The OCPHS Research Library – Source materials, cool stuff, coffee



**ASSUMPTIONS ARE BEING MADE.**

**Interpret accordingly.**



# The Exploration and the Exploring Party.

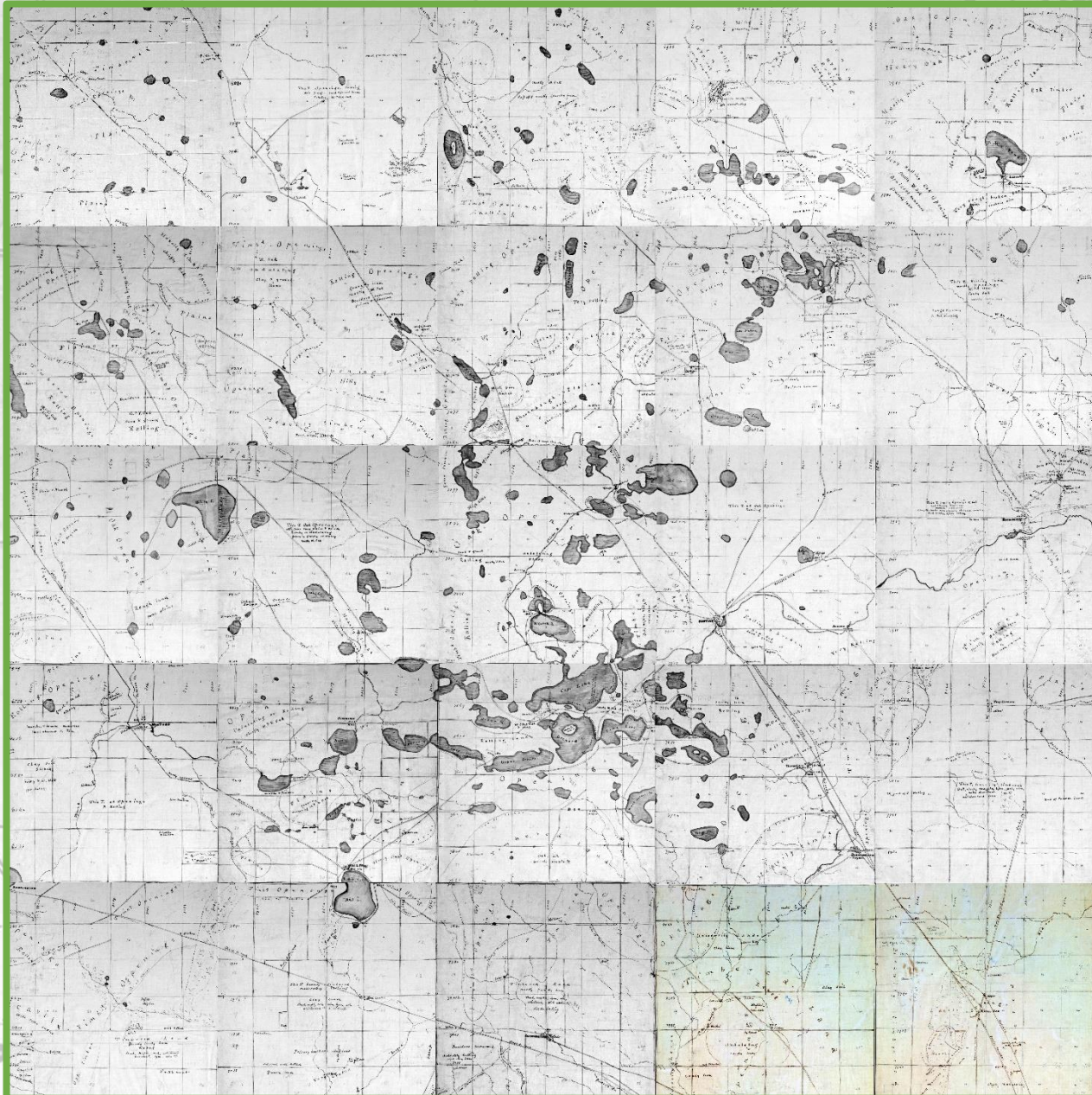
Who was there. What they saw.

Where they went.





# Oakland County - about 1840





# From the *Detroit Gazette*, November 13, 1818

## the interior of the Territory of Michigan.

### Mount Suelloy and Reed,

An expedition was lately formed, as is known by 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 result 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 unfavourable to the character of the soil, it was a principal object of the party to ascertain by their own observations 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 surprise 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 shallow or large waters; and in no case do they depart from this choice, nor have they a 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 deceived many from going further back, and has made a very unfavourable impression respecting the whole country. The circumstances mentioned, together with some others, have furnished interested and designing persons with the 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 ambitious emigrants, its lands have never this summer been exposed for sale. But we are that the country offers lands, rights and privileges to freemen, every friend to a American prosperity must have a wish to become acquainted with its natural advantages. Its location is one, which presents very favourable prospects. It stretches along the great highway from the far establishments in the N. West to the city of N. York—a course of navigation, intercepted by not more than thirty miles of land earthen. The territory is in fact surrounded with waters navigable for the largest vessels, and the main position with regard to the east, that any part of the western states, not being on the Atlantic

coast, is 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, to a good land well timbered, one mile and a half, and cross a running brook, then into ridge oak land which exhibited a beautiful appearance. You can see generally the distance of a half a mile. The soil is a 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 & 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. The first lake Wing is in section 20, township II, range 10, about 3 miles long in circumference, the waters exceedingly pure, and the banks beautifully elevated. North westerly from lake Wing, about a half a mile is lake Sibber, principally in section 28, about a mile and a half in circumference, containing a small island, the lands around it similar to those on lake Wing. To the north 2 miles is lake Seng, one mile long, and containing two small islands separated from lake McKinstry, two and a half miles long, by a narrow and high peninsula. The former, situated in section 17 and 18, and the latter in 7 and 8, township II, range 10. South westerly from the peninsulas is lake Montez, about 4 miles in circumference, situated partly in section 10, township II, range 10, and partly in township II, range 9. Half a mile further north westerly, leaving lake Canfield to the right, is lake Macomb, 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. The lands 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, which is situated principally in sections 2 and 3, and township II, range 9, and following an elevated ridge between these two lakes, we passed north westerly through oak ridges and prairies to lake McDonald, situated principally in section 6, same township and range. Here we changed our course north easterly, and traversed alternately ridges and places of prairies, and tamarack swamps, till we struck in section 33, township III, range 9, a river running into lake Cass—this river we named Andean—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 silicious pebbles, with a gentle current. From near Andean we passed over high ridges of good well timbered lands, and approached lake Elizabeth, lying principally in section 20 and 21, township III, range 9, thence our heading along the south shore of lake Elizabeth

by examining the reports of the surveyors given until the 1st of April, 1819; none of the land was...  
Merrill N. Y. (one of the) Whiting.  
Will be clock on log quest- les of the moderns  
The meet at Monday Nov.  
The se take plac  
A N e A boe d'ersigned, by the gro from the N Mur  
Exercises, Spelling Book; SHELDON & REED. New Goods. F. T. & J. PALMER have just received from New-York, and are now opening a very extensive assortment of  
Fall and Winter GOODS,  
comprising almost every article used in the country, which they offer at very reduced prices for cash. 691f  
DETROIT, Nov. 12 1818.  
ORDERED, that the assize of Beesd be 2lb. 10. oz. for 12-1/2 Cents. THOMAS ROWLAND, Sec'y. 691f.  
DETROIT, Nov. 10, 1818. Sec'y. 691f.

A newspaper started by Lewis Cass, published in New York and available on the East Coast.

This article neatly dispensed with that “interminable swamp” nonsense.

And it raised questions.

Who was there? What did they see? Where did they go?

Whiskey.  
20 Barrels Whiskey for sale by R. Garratt. Detroit, Nov. 9, 1818. 691f.  
NOTICE. GUSTAVUS R. ROOD requests all those indebted to him to call and settle the same, or they may expect suit. Detroit, Oct. 8 1818. 611f

# The Detroit Gazette, November 13, 1818

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...”

...

The Undersigned,

Andrew G. Whitney

Austin E. Wing

John Monteith

Benjamin Stead

David C. McKinstry



# The Exploration and the Exploring Party.

## The Lake Names and the Explorers.

### *Detroit Gazette:*

“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.”

Five men signed their name to this amazing piece of reporting.

But clearly, there were others along.

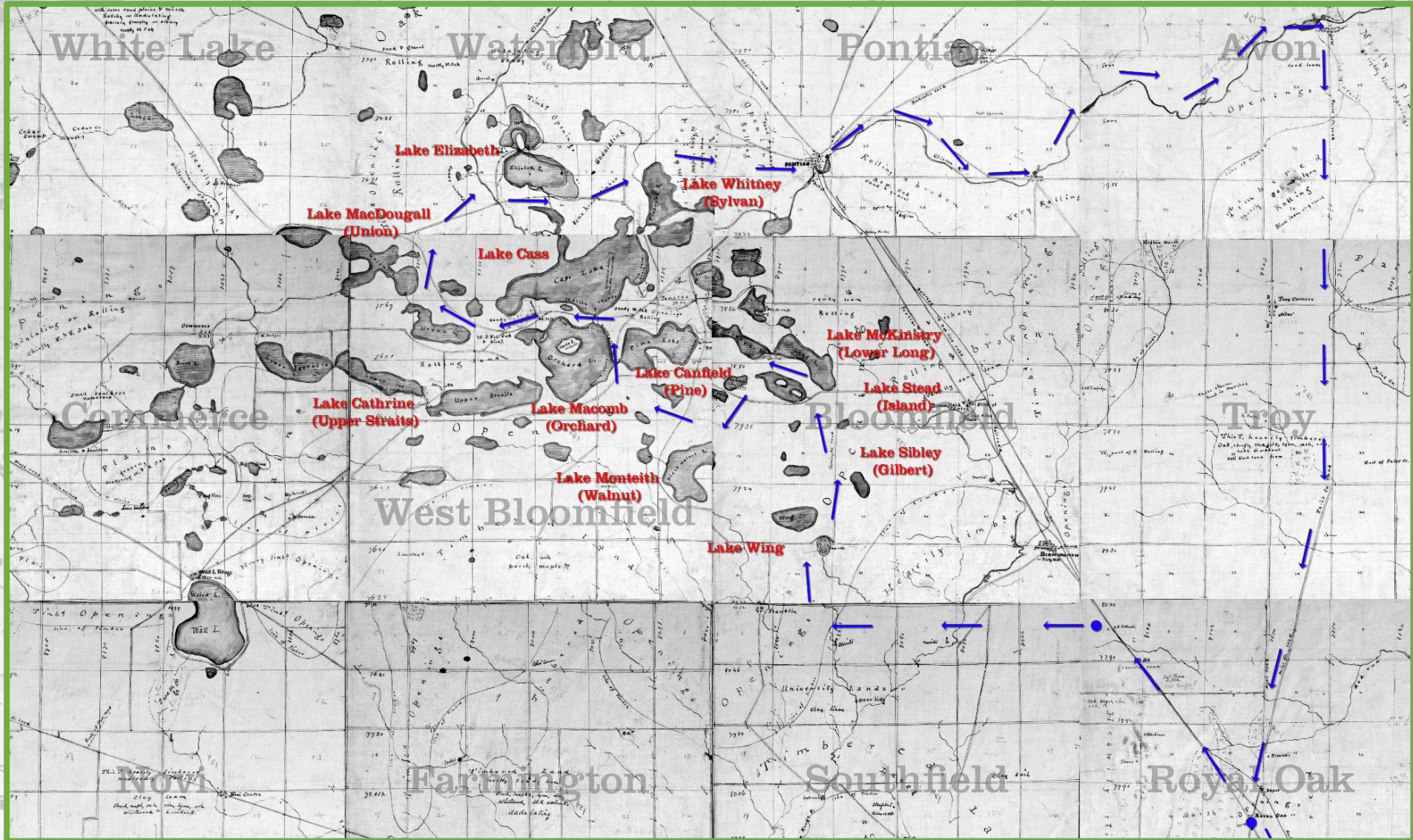
# The Exploration and the Exploring Party.

## The Lake Names.

<b>Explorer</b>	<b>Their Lake</b>	<b>Modern Name</b>
John Monteith	Lake Monteith	Walnut
David McKinstry	Lake McKinstry	Upper Long
Austin Wing	Lake Wing	Wing
Andrew Whitney	Lake Whitney	Sylvan
Benjamin Stead	Lake Stead	Island
Lewis Cass	Lake Cass	Cass Lake
Elizabeth Cass	Lake Elizabeth	Elizabeth
Augustus Canfield	Lake Canfield	Pine
Alexander Macomb	Lake Macomb	Orchard
Catherine Macomb	Lake Cathrine	Upper Straits
Solomon Sibley	Lake Sibley	Gilbert
George MacDougall	Lake M'Dougal	Union

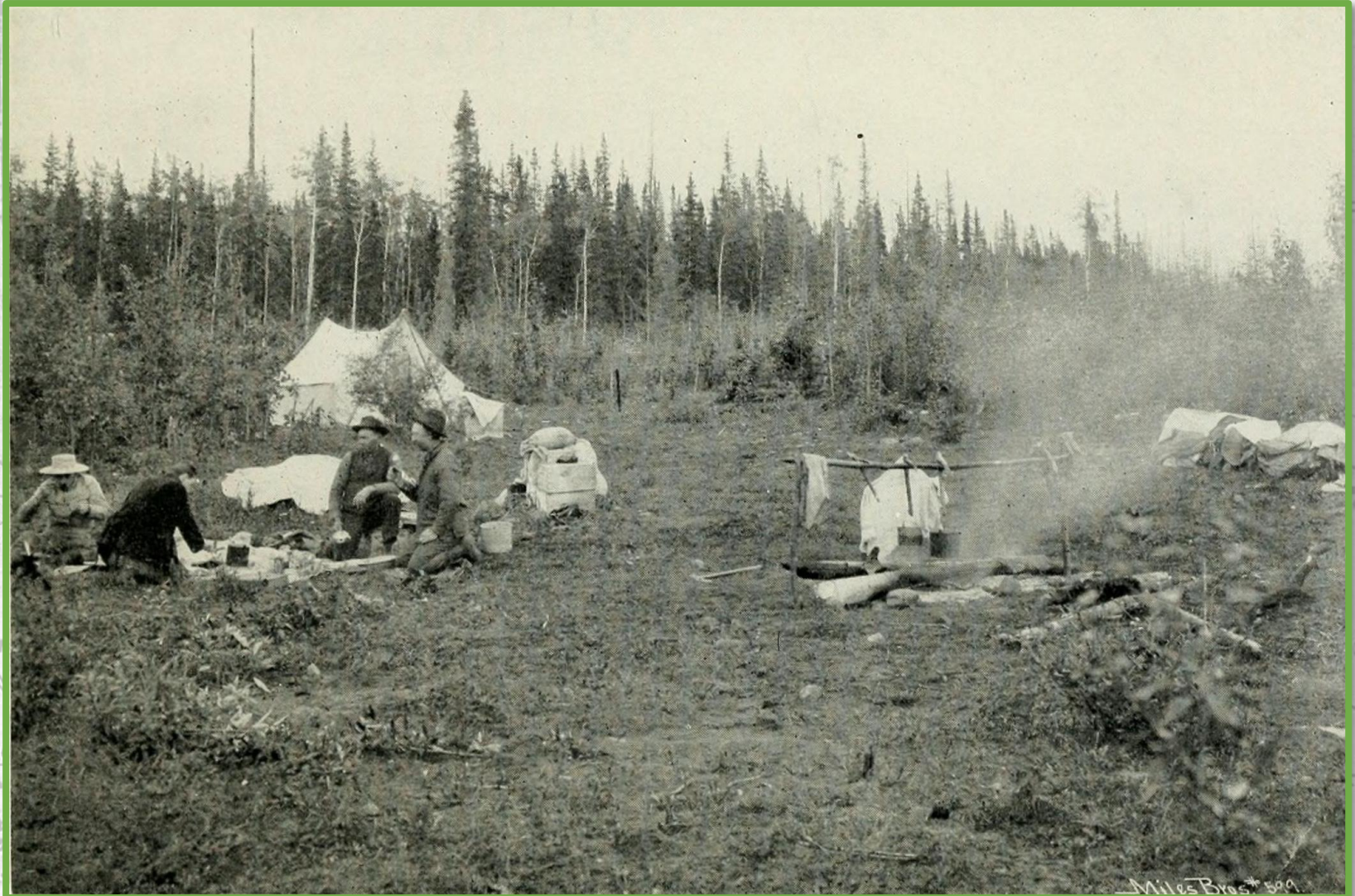


# The route. Where they went.

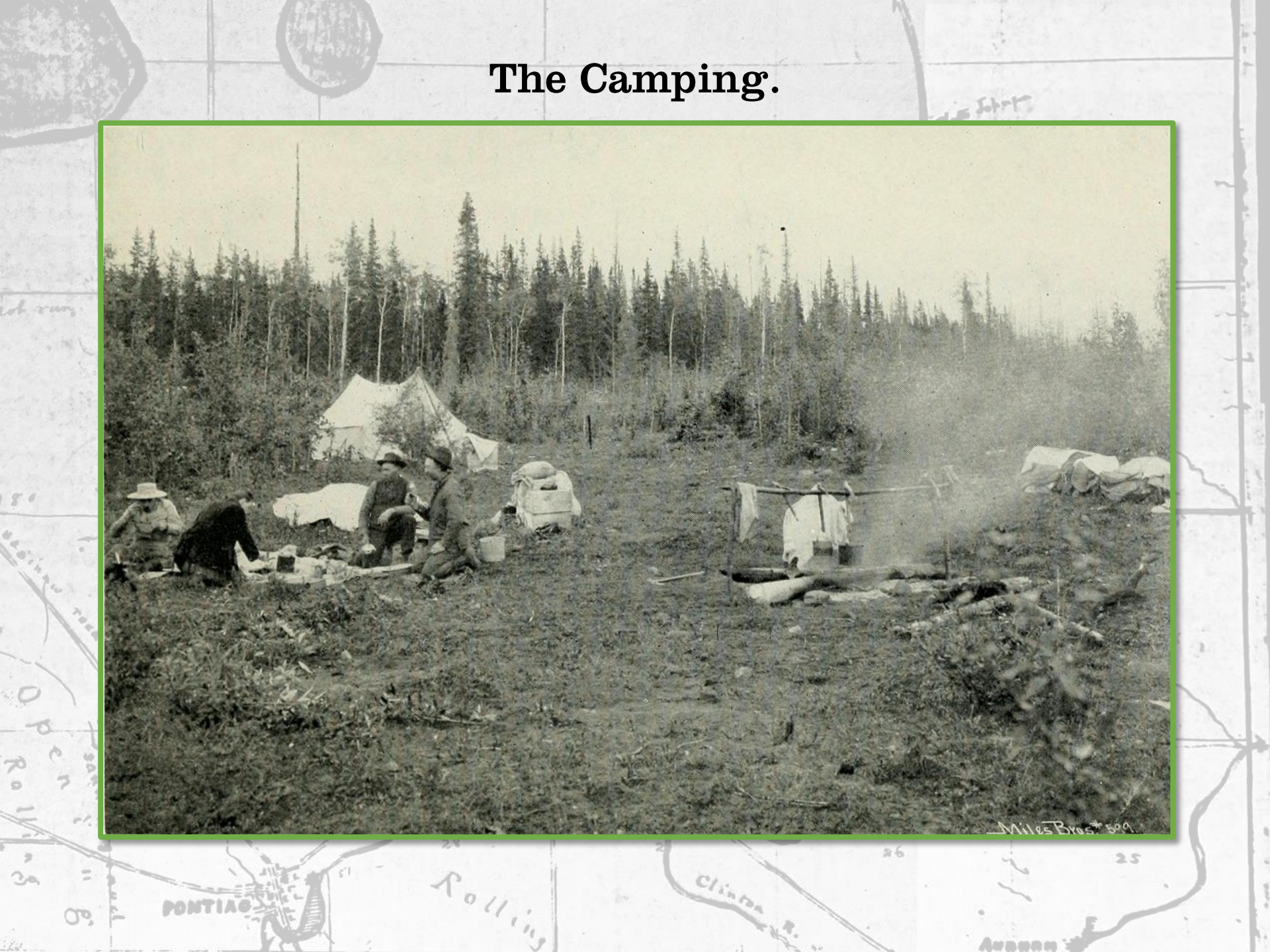




# The Camping.

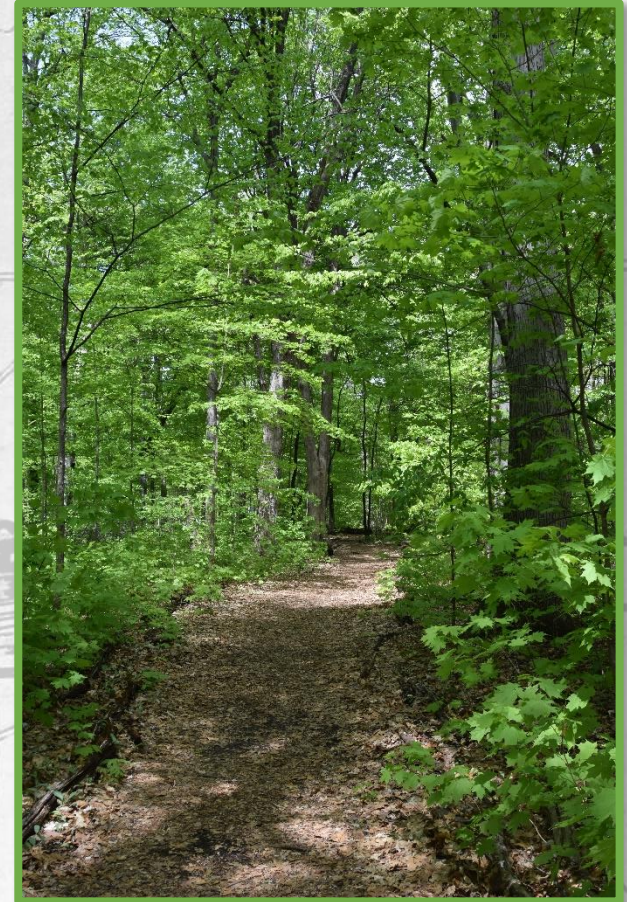


Miles Bros. # 509





# Swamp and River and Prairie.



And the trail.



# Oak Openings





**Fall, 1818.  
Let's get busy.**

- **Our exploring party returned to Detroit on October 19, 1818.**
- **On October 30, the Detroit Gazette teased the article to be published.**
- **On November 5, the Pontiac Company organized.**
- **On November 6, Stephen Mack bought 1,280 acres of land.**
- **On November 9, the Pontiac Company named their new town.**
- **And on November 13, the Detroit Gazette article was published.**

## The Pontiac Land Company November 5, 1818 – The First Meeting

“At a meeting of the following gentlemen at Detroit Nov. 5th, 1818, to wit, Messrs. Woodbridge, Stephen Mack, **Solomon Sibley**, **Austin E. Wing**, **David C McKinstry**, **A.G. Whitney**, **Maj. Gen Alex. Macomb**, John L. Whiting, Wm. Thompson, **Benjamin Stead**, and James Fulton assembled for the purpose...”

## November 9, 1818 – Naming the Town

6.

Resolved that the Town contemplated to be laid out by this association, be called "Pontiac!"

# The Pontiac Land Company

**Bolded names: Went on the October Expedition**

Name	Shares	Lots	Age in 1818	Occupation
William Woodbridge			38	Politician, Lawyer
Col. Stephen Mack			52	Merchant, miller, land speculator
<b>Solomon Sibley</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>Lawyer, jurist, merchant</b>
John L. Whiting			25	Doctor
<b>Austin E. Wing</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>Politician</b>
<b>David C. McKinstry</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Businessman, speculator</b>
<b>Benjamin Stead</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>Merchant, tailor, politician</b>
Henry J. Hunt			30	Merchant, Real Estate
Maj. Abraham Edwards			37	Military doctor
Archibald Darragh			30-35	Military Officer
<b>Gen. Alexander Macomb</b>			<b>36</b>	<b>Major General of the US</b>
<b>Andrew G. Whitney</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Lawyer</b>
William Thompson			32	Doctor
Daniel LeRoy			43	Lawyer
James Fulton				Politician, land speculator
Shubael Conant			35	Merchant, land speculator



# The Land

LIBER I

Page 9. Stephen Mack to Fontiac Company,  $8\frac{1}{4}$  sections. 11/5/1818

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Resolved that the Association for <sup>the</sup> purchase contemplated by this meeting consist of sixteen persons, and that the tract of land to be purchased by said Association consist of eight <sup>quarter</sup> Sections.
- 2<sup>d</sup>. Resolved, that the purchase to be made consist of Section 29. the N. E. quarter Section of Section 32 and the N. W. - S. W. and N. E. quarter Sections of Section 28. in Township III and Range 10 East, North of the base line
- 3<sup>d</sup>. Resolved that the Maximum price to be given for the above 8 quarter Sections be four dollars.
- 4<sup>th</sup>. Resolved that Messrs Mack, Whiting & Thompson be requested to purchase the said 8 quarter Sections for this Association.

# The Land

## November 26, 1818

LIBER I

Page 9. Stephen Mack to Pontiac Company. 11/26/1818  
All of section 29  
NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  section 32  
NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , section 28; total of 1280 acres or 8 quarter  
sections.  
\$128.00 was 1/20 of purchase price.

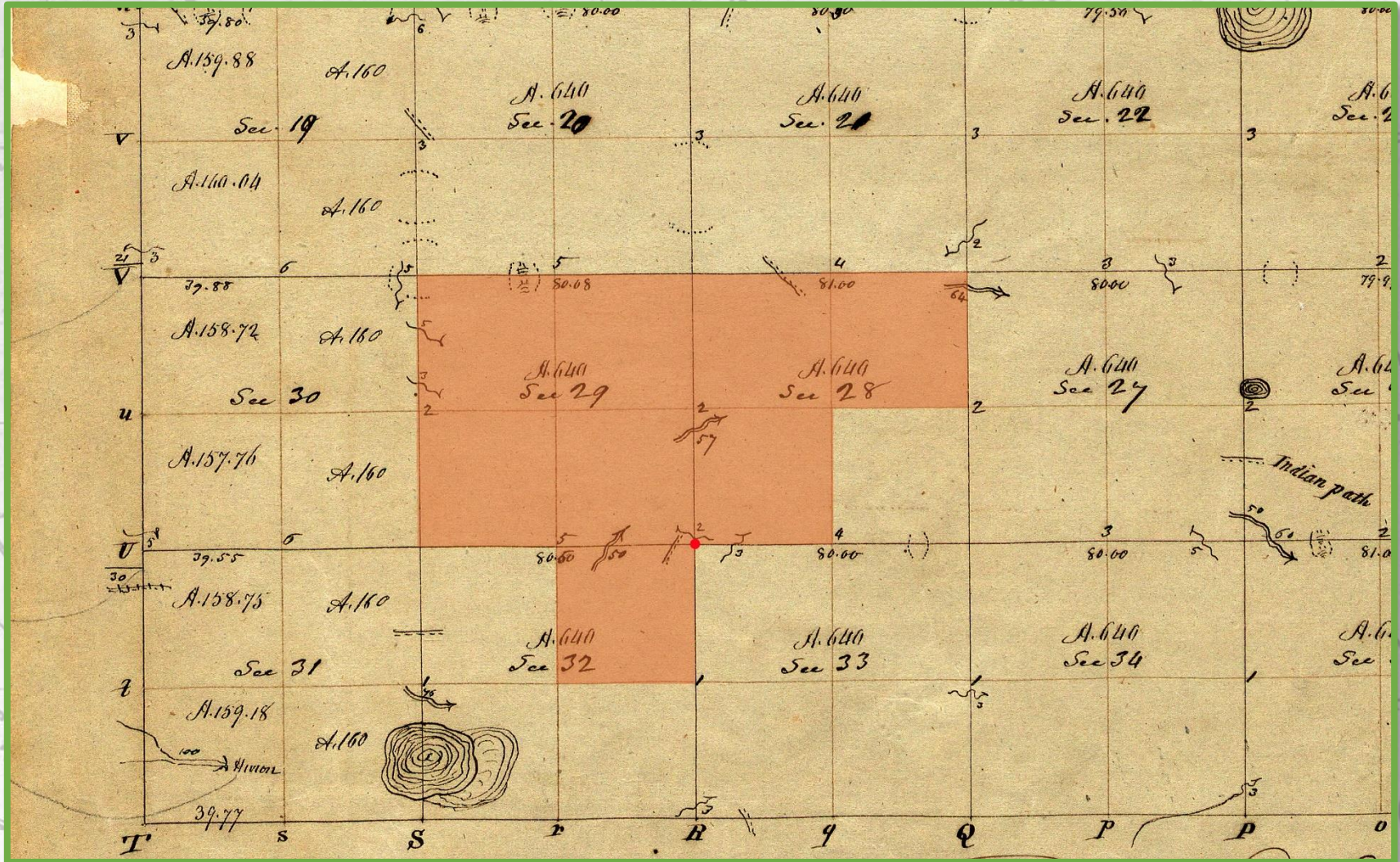
### Math

**Purchased at \$2.00  
per acre**

**1,280 acres = \$2,560**

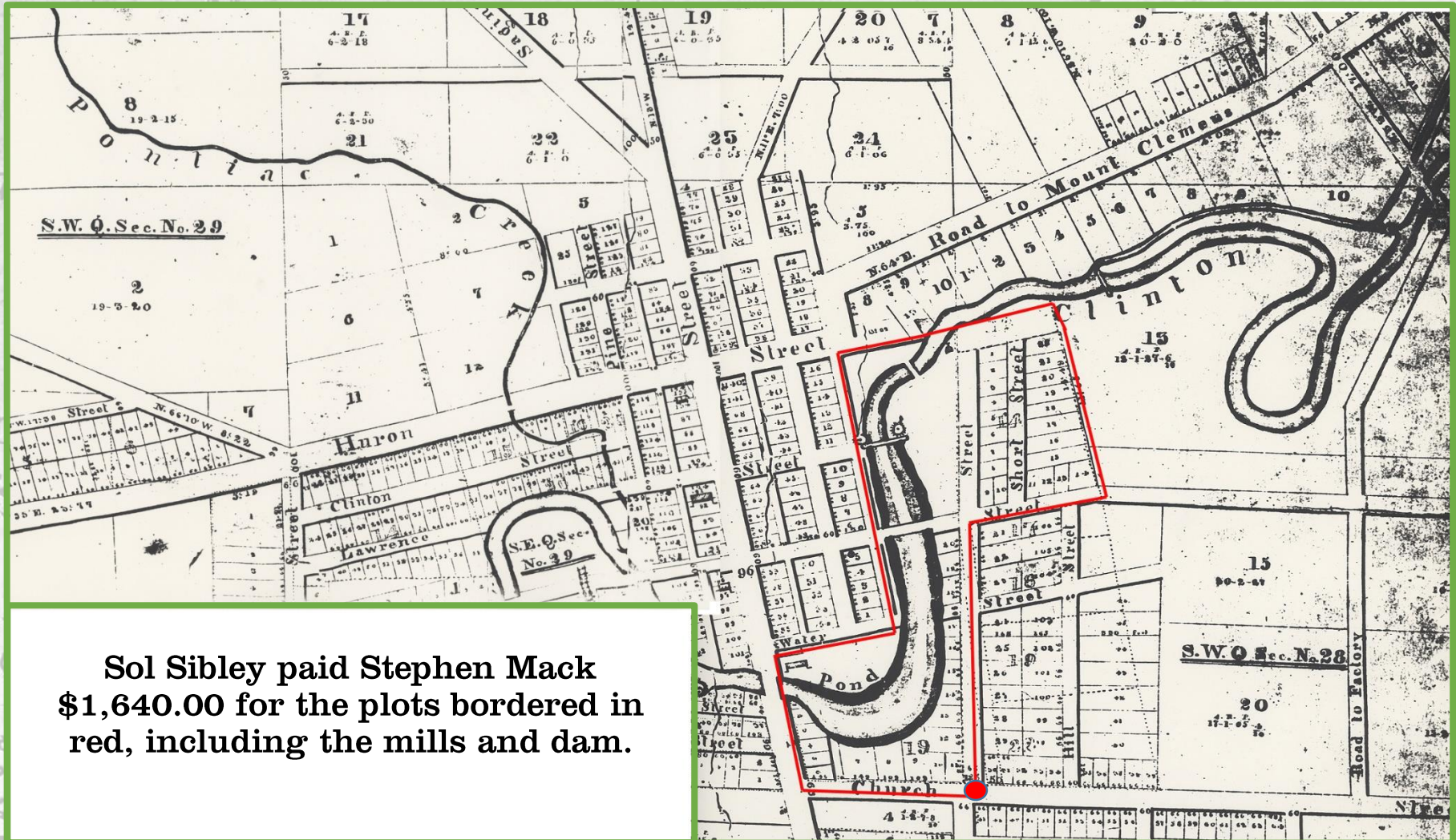


# Pontiac Land Company Original Land Purchase, Nov. 5/6, 1818





# Solomon Sibley's Mill Privilege March 8, 1819



Sol Sibley paid Stephen Mack  
\$1,640.00 for the plots bordered in  
red, including the mills and dam.



# Solomon Sibley's Mill Privilege

called the Mill Privilege, and described and bounded as follows, to wit: Beginning, at a Post standing on the Easterly side of Sagame Street at the distance of Forty Feet from the south west corner of City Lot, numbered Fifty Five, on the plan or survey of

The "Mill Privilege" consisted of the land and the water rights to the Clinton River.

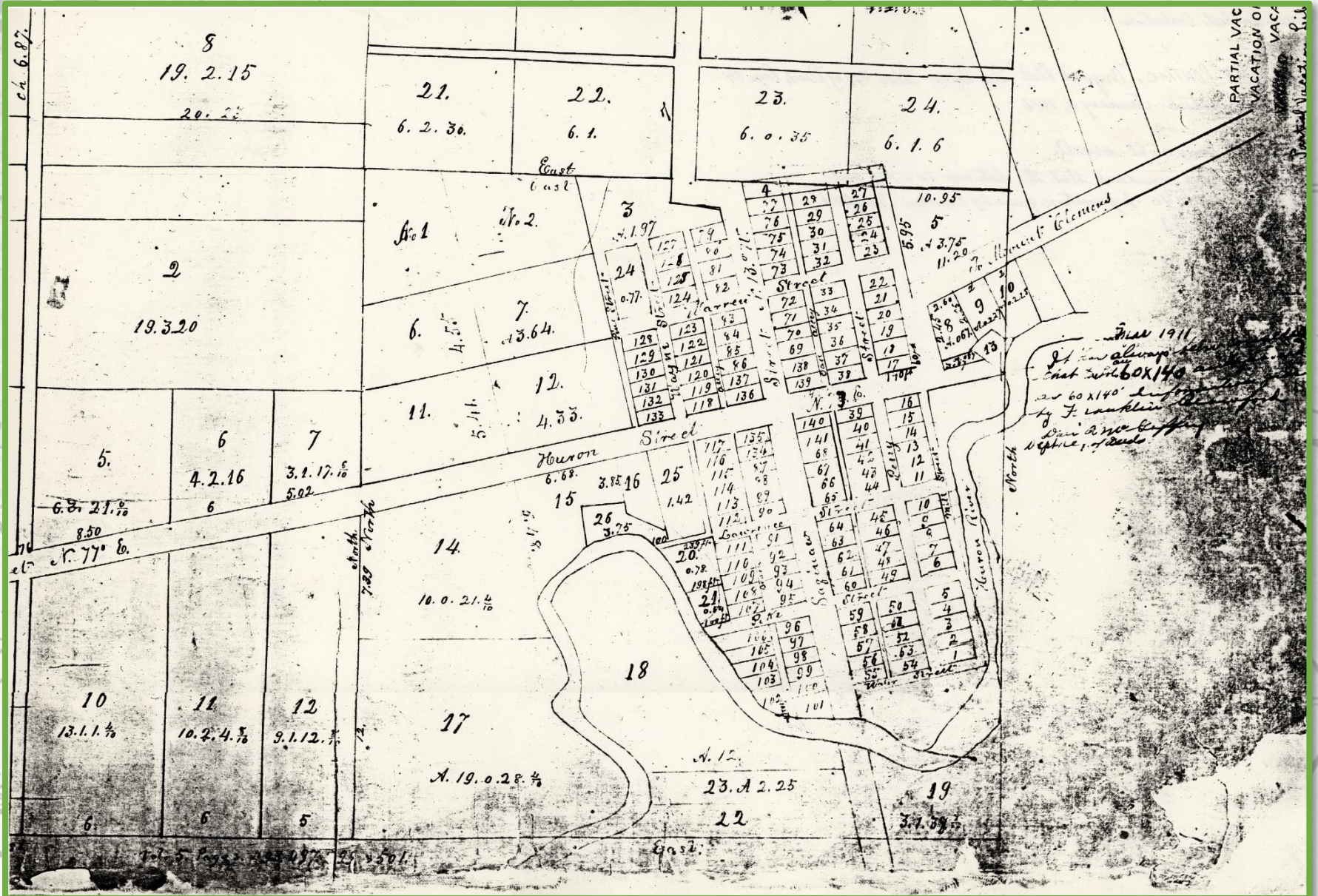
It appears that this sale was a mechanism to transfer the water rights to Solomon Sibley, and then to Stephen Mack as a private citizen.

It was a legal maneuver to fund the new town while maintaining ownership of the mill properties.

plan of the Town, where Mills or other Buildings have not already been erected, and which said Tract of Land above described, contains by Estimation, Thirty acres, more or less.



# Original Plat with Outlots





# A Reconstructed Plat (1840's?)



# Naming the County Seat

## Timing Review

November 5/6/9:

Pontiac “founded”.

November/December:

Mill under construction,  
workers moving to town

January 1819:

Lewis Cass creates Oakland  
County by proclamation

February:

Pontiac Company submits  
their bid to be the county  
seat

February:

Oakland County begins  
operations

March:

Pontiac proclaimed the seat  
of justice.

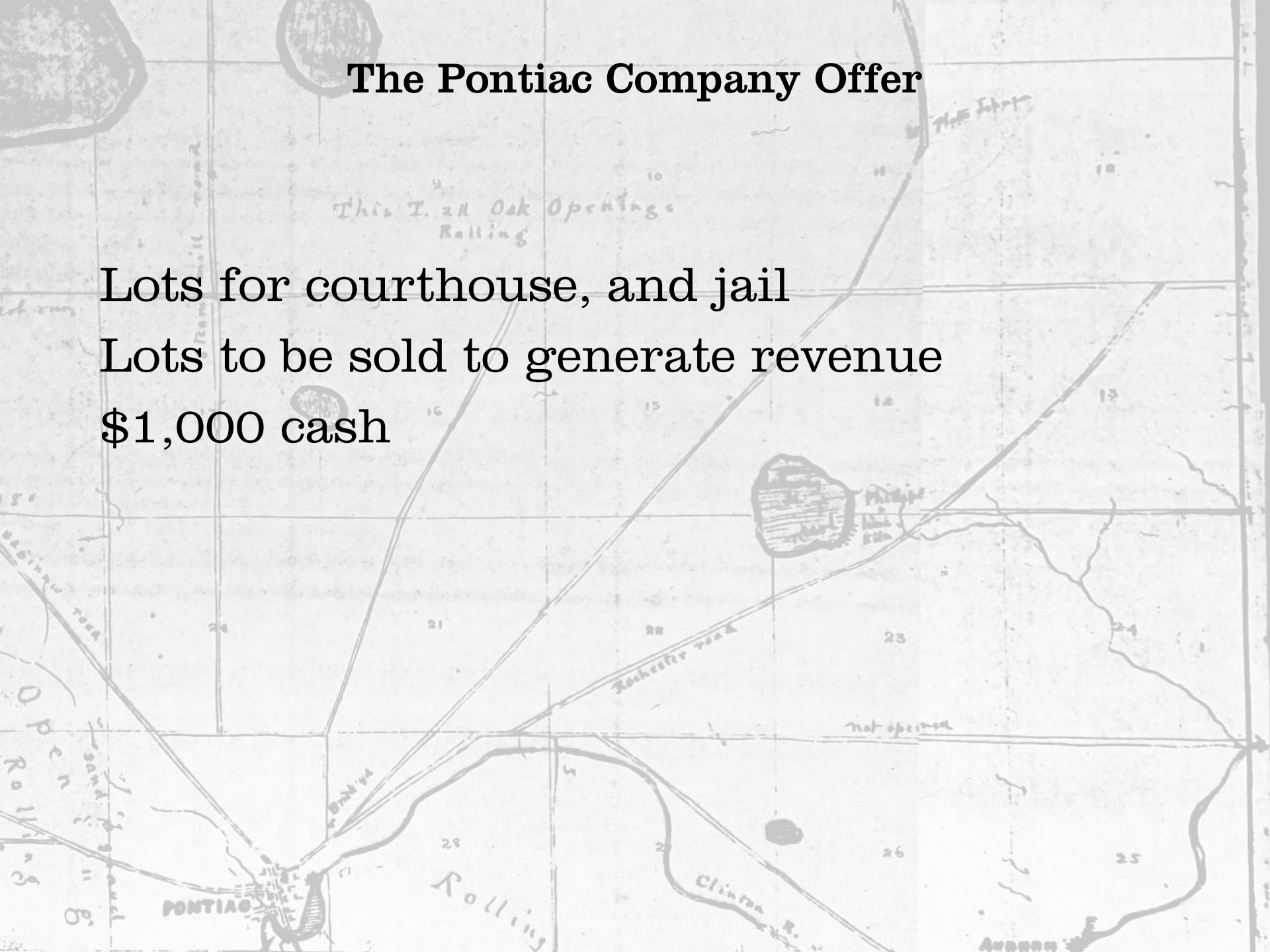


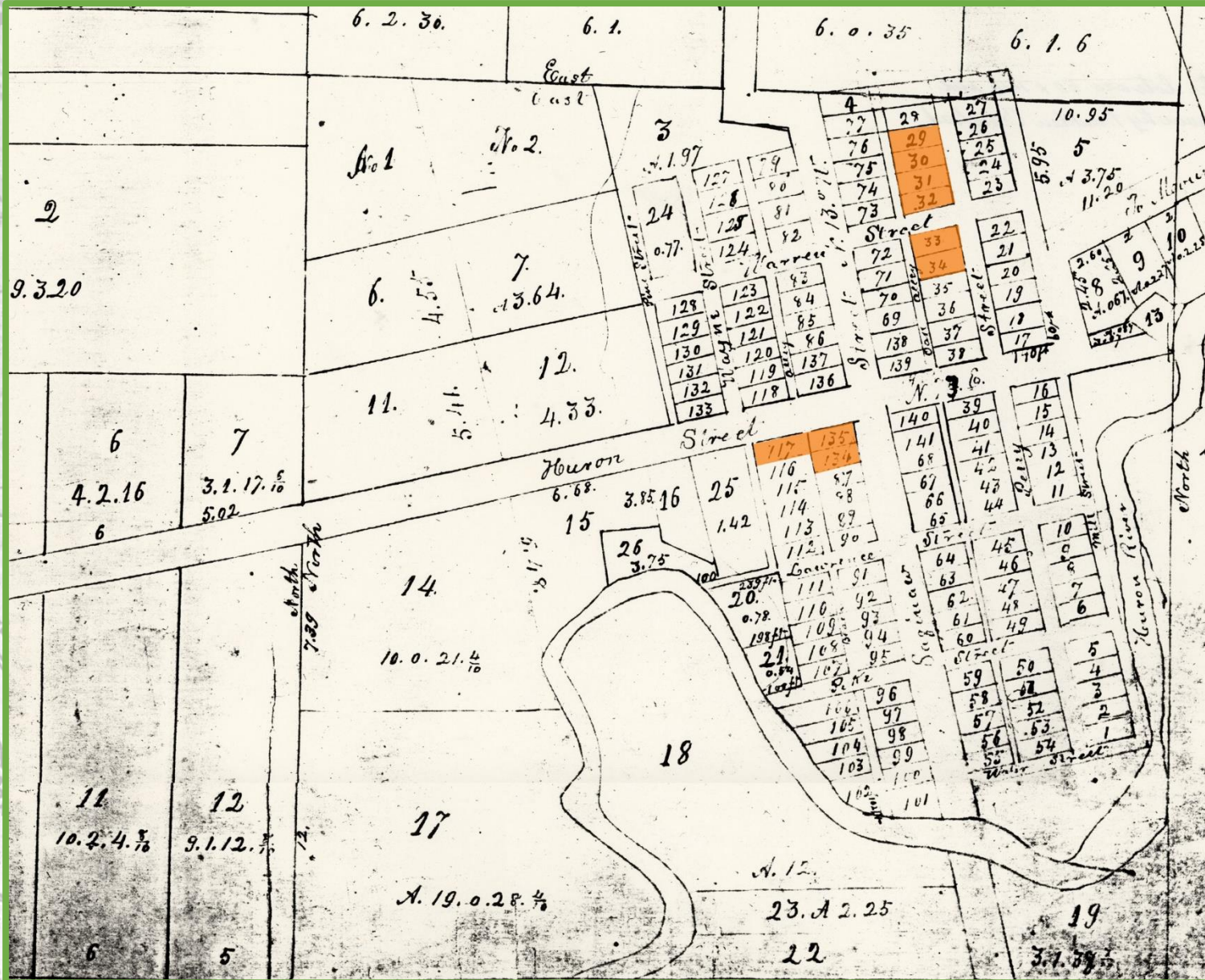
# The Pontiac Company Offer

Lots for courthouse, and jail

Lots to be sold to generate revenue

\$1,000 cash







## Wrapping Up

Resettling the indigenous population was critical to establishing Michigan as a state.

Native American resettlement efforts caused unrest in the Saginaw Valley and tension along the Saginaw Trail.

A military road between Detroit and Saginaw was a critical need.

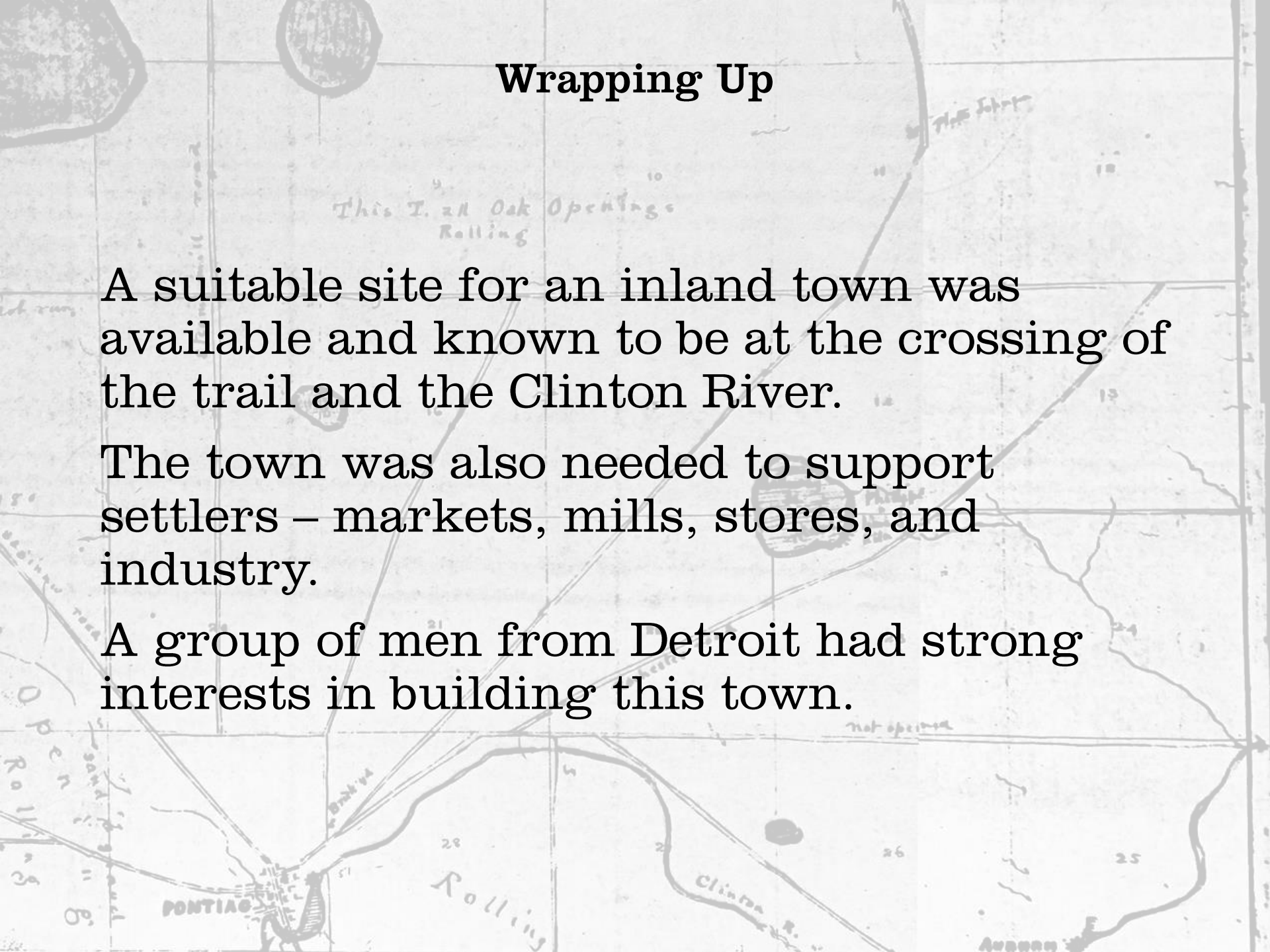
Roads need rest stops, especially for horses, after about two days travel.

## Wrapping Up

A suitable site for an inland town was available and known to be at the crossing of the trail and the Clinton River.

The town was also needed to support settlers – markets, mills, stores, and industry.

A group of men from Detroit had strong interests in building this town.





## Wrapping Up

We speculate that the October 1818 Expedition had three goals.

- To assess the center of the new county for a suitable site for a county seat.
- The Pontiac Company members wanted to verify the Pontiac town site, and tour the area to familiarize themselves with their new land.
- The Pontiac Company members wanted to see what lands were available for land speculation.

# Welcome to Tambora.



**April 10, 1815**

Summit reduced to ash –  
the mountain lost 4,000  
feet in height instantly.

Sent 1200 cubic kilometers  
of material into the sky -  
the equivalent of 2.2 billion  
battleships. That's a lot.

Ten times stronger than  
Mt Pinatubo, and largely  
unreported.



# The Year Without a Summer aka “Eighteen Hundred and Froze To Death”

A persistent “dry fog” reddened and dimmed the sunlight.

“Severe frosts occurred every month; June 7th and 8th snow fell, and it was so cold that crops were cut down, even freezing the roots ....

“In the early Autumn when corn was in the milk it was so thoroughly frozen that it never ripened and was scarcely worth harvesting.

“Breadstuffs were scarce and prices high and the poorer class of people were often in straits for want of food. It must be remembered that the granaries of the great west had not then been opened to us by railroad communication, and people were obliged to rely upon their own resources or upon others in their immediate locality.”

- Massachusetts Farmer