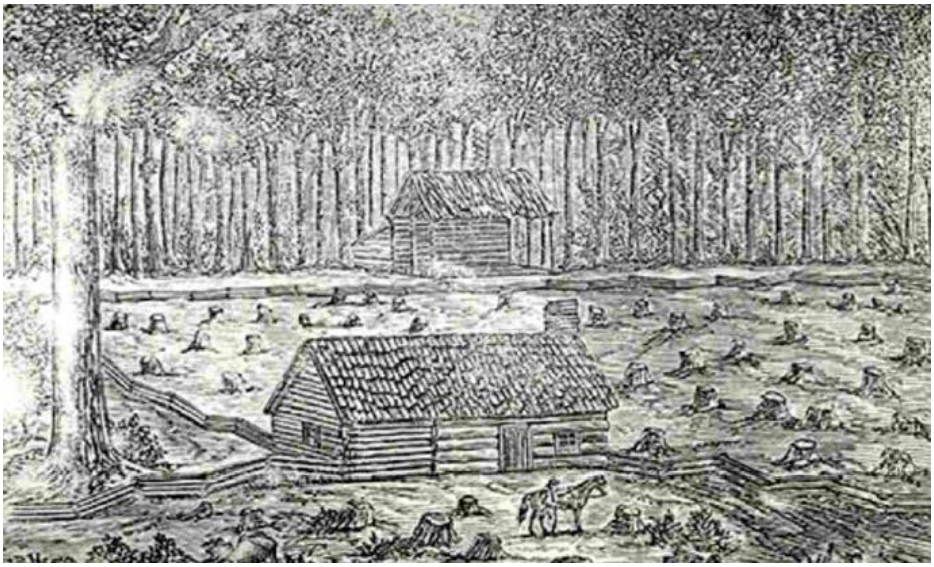


A FORTNIGHT IN THE WILDERNESS

A presentation prepared by

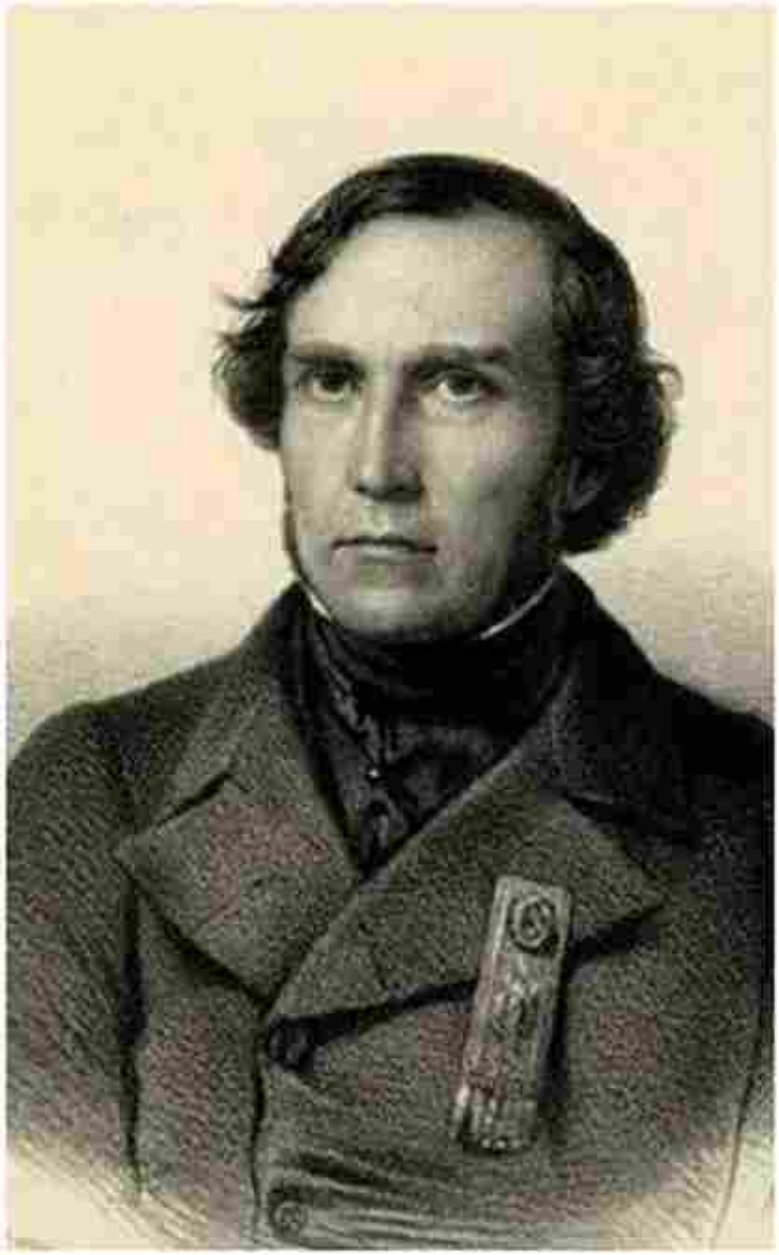
William Collins,
Executive Director
Thumb Land Conservancy

and presented at the
Thumbland Conservancy Meeting
March 9, 2019

The presentation outlines the 1831 journey of Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont along the western edge of the Thumb. They traveled by horse, mostly on the Saginaw Trail, from Detroit to Pontiac, and north to the early settlements of Flint and Saginaw. The very insightful observations of Alexis de Tocqueville provide perhaps the best glimpse of the people, cultures, and feeling of the primeval forest wilderness of our region before it was completely overrun by settlers.

1831 American Journey of Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont

- Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville sent by French government in 1831 to study American prison system.
- They left France about 9 months after the July Revolution (Second French Revolution) of July 29-31, 1830. They had fallen somewhat out of favor with the new French regime. Tocqueville was at odds with all political sides. Not a bad time to leave France for a while.
- In 1826, Beaumont was King's Prosecutor at the Tribunal de Première Instance at Versailles. Met and befriended aristocrat Tocqueville. Lifelong friends although Beaumont's "eloquence and verve contrasted greatly with Tocqueville's bad rhetoric and asocial behavior".



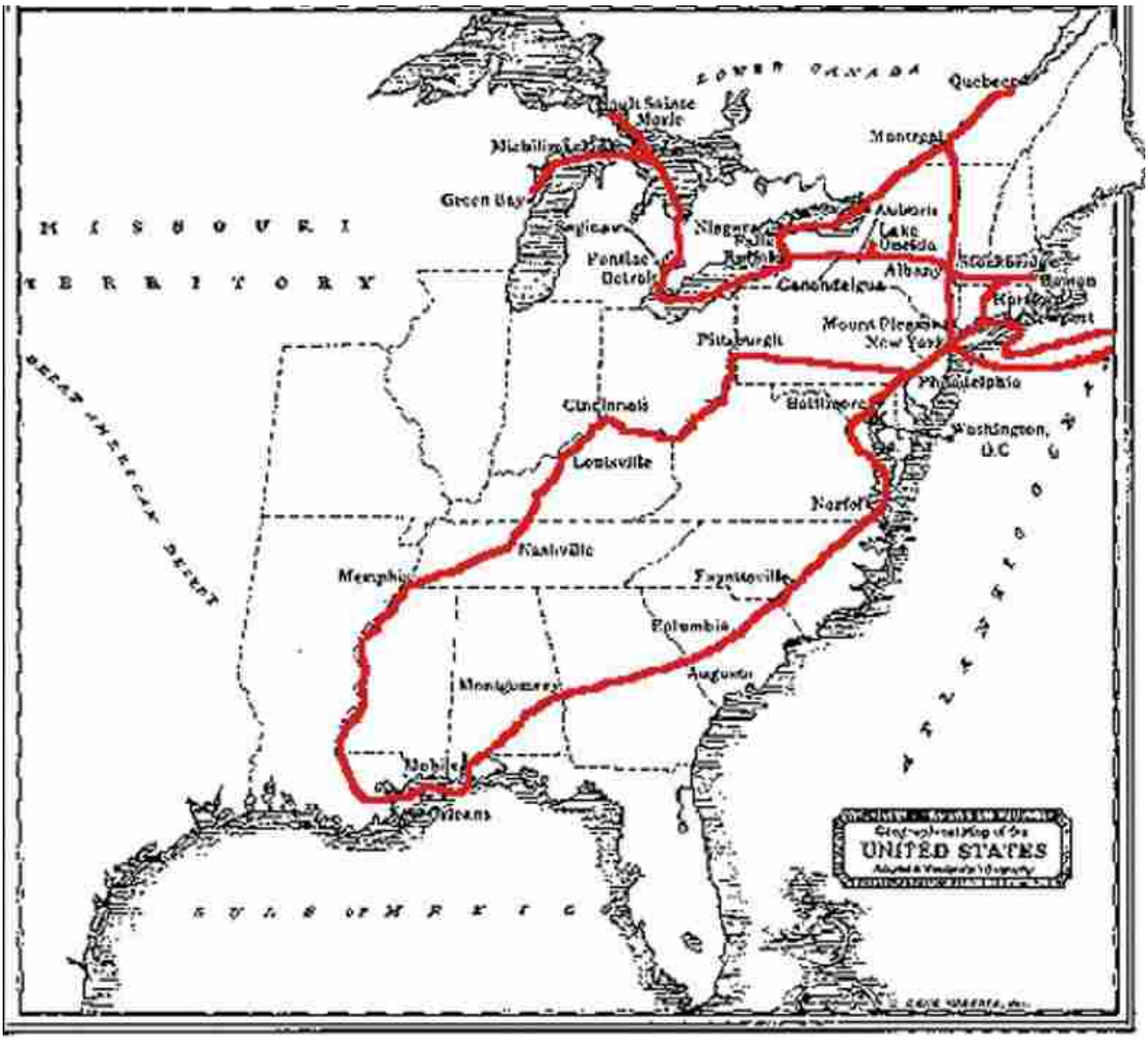
Gustave de Beaumont, 1848. Artist unknown.

- Beaumont had a legal background, sympathetic to social injustice, eloquent, was commissioned by King Louis-Phillipe to study the American prison system.
- Beaumont was 29 in 1831.
- Beaumont married Clémentine de Lafayette, granddaughter of famous General Lafayette, in 1836.

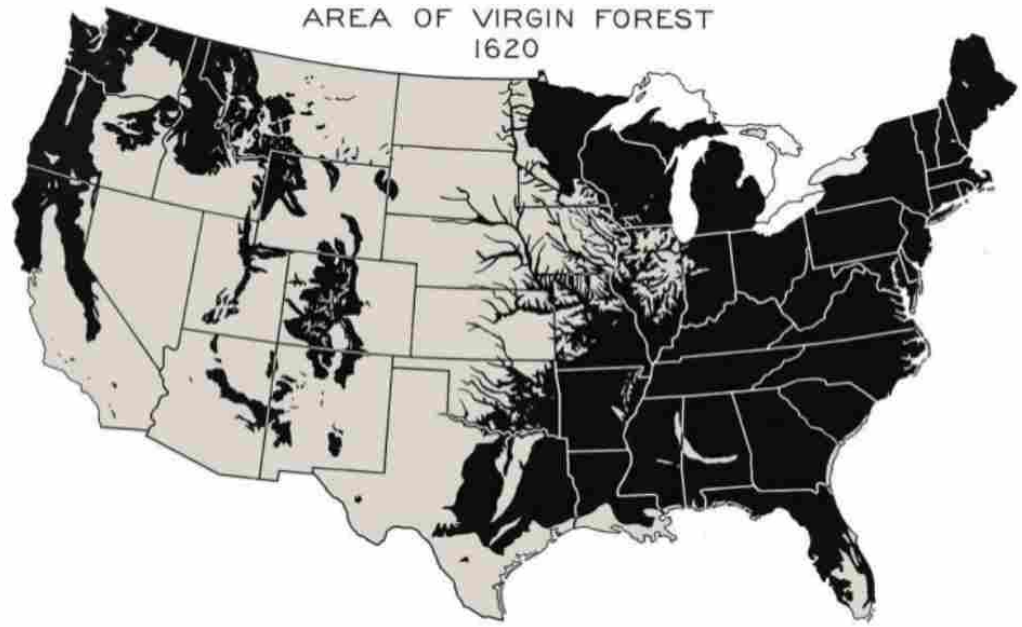
Alexis de Tocqueville, 1844. Portrait by Théodore Chassériau.

- Tocqueville joined Beaumont intent to study American democracy.
- Tocqueville was in serious relationship with Mary Mottley (English woman living in Paris) from 1828. Tocqueville spoke english “fairly well” perhaps with help from Mary. They married in 1835.
- Tocqueville 25, turned 26 on July 29 back at Flint River, also on the anniversary of July Revolution.
- They partly followed route of Tocqueville’s relative François-René Chateaubriand in 1791.
- Chateaubriand published *Atala* in 1801 about two young Indian lovers in the wilds, *René* about a young Frenchman who lived with the Natchez Indians in Louisiana, *Les Natches,* an epic of the New World, published in 1826-27, and *Travels in America* in 1827.
- Chateaubriand popularized in France a romantic vision of North America’s native inhabitants.
- Tocqueville seemed partially guided by expectations originating from writings of Chateaubriand.
- Tocqueville and Beaumont traveled by horses from Detroit to Saginaw and back, July 23 through July 31, 1831, 9 days.
- Tocqueville began writing *A Fortnight in the Wilderness* on board the steamboat Superior heading toward Lake Huron on August 01.

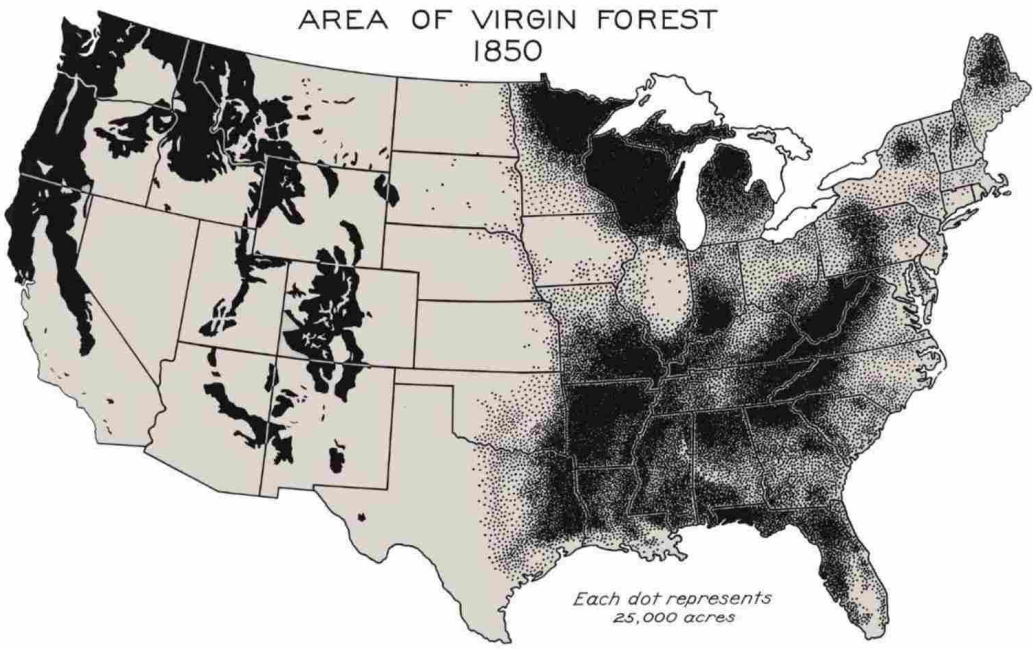
- Tocqueville published *Democracy in America* in two volumes in 1835 and 1840.
- *A Fortnight in the Wilderness* later included as an Appendix of *Democracy in America*.
- Translated from French version *Quinze jours dans le désert* or *Fifteen Days in the Wilderness*.
- Published in 1860 by Beaumont after death of Tocqueville in 1859.
- *A Fortnight in the Wilderness* reveals a deep reverence for the vast forest wilderness of North America in addition to insightful observations of settlers and Native Americans.
- Beaumont published *Marie* or *Slavery in the United States: A Novel of Jacksonian America* in 1835



1831 American journey of Tocqueville and Beaumont.



At the time of European settlement in North America, primary (or virgin) forests covered nearly all of the East Coast.



Meyer WB. 1995. Past and present land use and land cover in the USA. Consequences. Spring 1995:25-33.

Hard to find wilderness or native Americans in the East in 1831

- Advancing west through New England, their goal of finding untouched wilderness and Native Americans tribes “seemed to flee before them”.
- People said Indians were there 10 years ago, 5 years ago, 2 years ago. A person said he cut down the first tree of the forest. It seemed they were too late.
- Someone said the Indians are beyond the Great Lakes, It is a race that is becoming extinct; they are not made for civilization. It kills them.
- Even in 1831, so much of the wilderness already cleared and settled.

Native Americans detested, and eliminated not so much by war, but by alcohol and by disconnection from land and traditional lifestyle

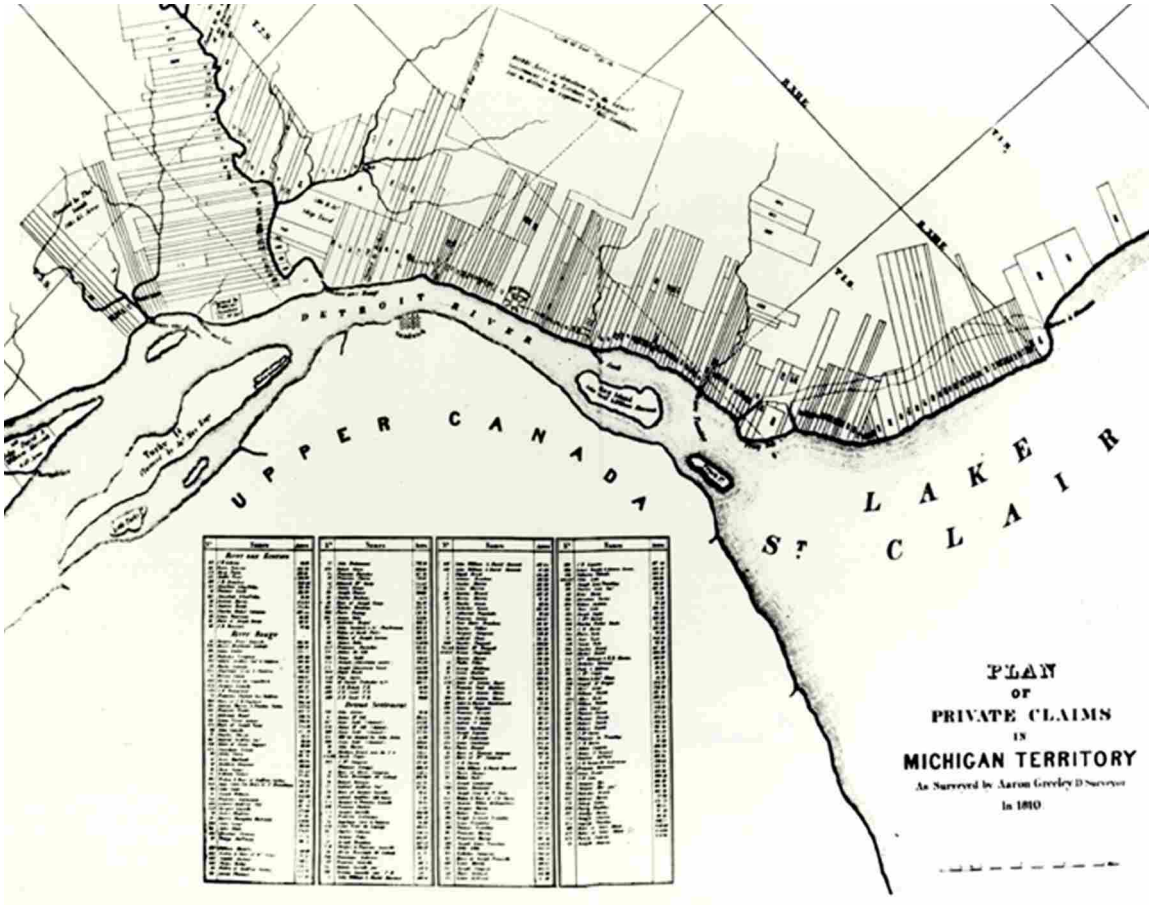
- Tocqueville and Beaumont tried to help a Native American man lying in a street in Buffalo, New York. They encountered complete apathy in seeking help.
- "Amidst this society so well-ordered, so prudish, so full of morality and virtue, you find a complete insensitivity; a sort of cold and implacable egoism when it concerns the natives of America. But it is the same ruthless sentiment that animates the European race here as well as everywhere else."
- Someone said, "It isn't that we often wage war on them, but the brandy that we sell to them at a low cost removes more of them every year than we could do with our arms. This world belongs to us, they added; God, by denying its first inhabitants the ability to become more civilized, destined them in advance to an inevitable destruction. The true owners of the continent are those who know how to make the most of its riches."
- "Satisfied with his reasoning the American goes to church where he hears a minister of the Gospel repeat to him that men are brothers and that the eternal being, who made them all on the same model, gave to all of them the duty to help one another."

Shoreline of Lake Erie flat and bordered by thick forest, except small towns and settlements

- Forested and flat shores very different from most European lakes.

Detroit a small city of a few thousand people, many French

- Detroit city of 2,000 to 3,000 people.
- Jesuits founded in 1710.
- Large number of French families. Names included Brush, Beaubien, Dequindre, Rivard, Peltier, Compeau, Beufait, Macomb, Trombley …



1810 Detroit map by Aaron Greeley of French private claims (ribbon farms). Detroit Public Library.

Americans value development. Don't understand the desire to see wilderness or respect for Native Americans

- To find wilderness was difficult.
- "Americans easily understand going to the wilderness if it is a matter of earning a dollar; for that is the point. But that someone would do similar things out of curiosity, this does not occur to his mind. He prizes only the work of man. He will gladly send you to visit a road, a bridge, a beautiful village. But that you attach a value to great trees and to a beautiful solitude, that is absolutely beyond him."
- Tocqueville (and Beaumont?) a century ahead of their time in valuing wilderness. Perhaps influenced by various authors, in addition to Chateaubriand, of emerging thought.

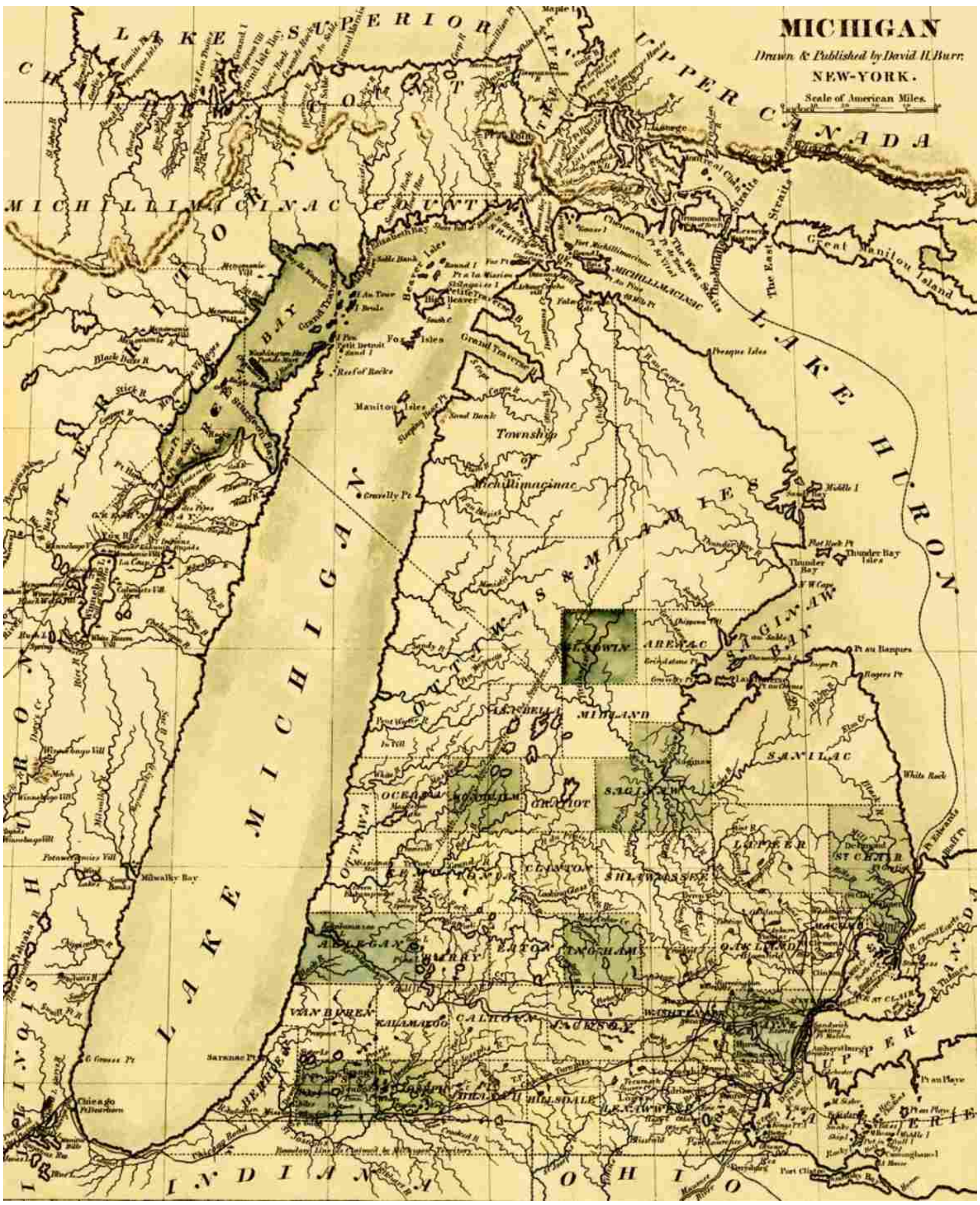
Necessary to pose as business men to be taken seriously about wanting to travel to distant unsettled areas

- "We didn't take long to realize that it was impossible to obtain the truth from them by frontal assault and that we had to *maneuver*."
- They visited Major John Biddle at the US Land Office at Jefferson Avenue and Randolph Street in Detroit.
- Upon presenting themselves as business men, Major Biddle "… understood marvelously this time what we wanted to do and immediately launched into a host of details that we listened to eagerly."
- Biddle was from prominent family of Philadelphia. Mayor of Detroit 1827-28. Later served in Michigan House of Representatives. Had many business interests. Several Majors positioned themselves politically for economic gain in the Michigan Territory.

Major John Biddle. Portrait by Thomas Sully.

Southwest Michigan most suitable for settlement and land speculation. Beyond Pontiac was wilderness

- Major Biddle suggested they visit the St. Joseph River area in southwest Michigan with "beautiful villages".
- Prairie in southern Michigan settled first because no tree clearing required and deep topsoil.
- "Good! we said to ourselves; we now know where we should not go unless we want to visit the wilderness by postal coach."
- Major Biddle suggested they go toward Pontiac, with "quite beautiful settlements", but "must not think about settling farther away; the country is covered by an almost impenetrable forest that extends endlessly toward the northwest, where you find only wild beasts and Indians."
- At this time, many military officials, like Major Biddle, were invested in lands and involved with legal proceedings involving land. Could it be that the popular belief that Michigan was all swamp and "impenetrable" wilderness inhabited by hostile animals and Indians was largely a myth to keep new interests from claiming land before established investors could get to it?

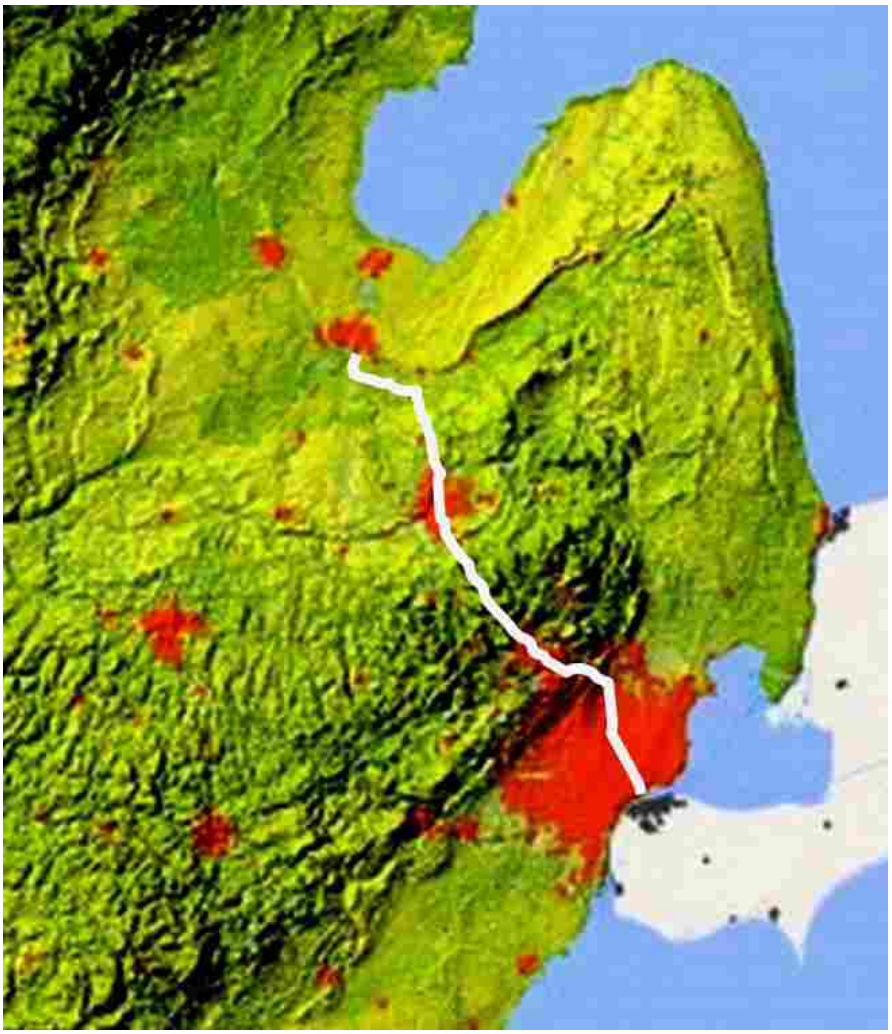


1831 Michigan map showing established counties. State of Michigan.

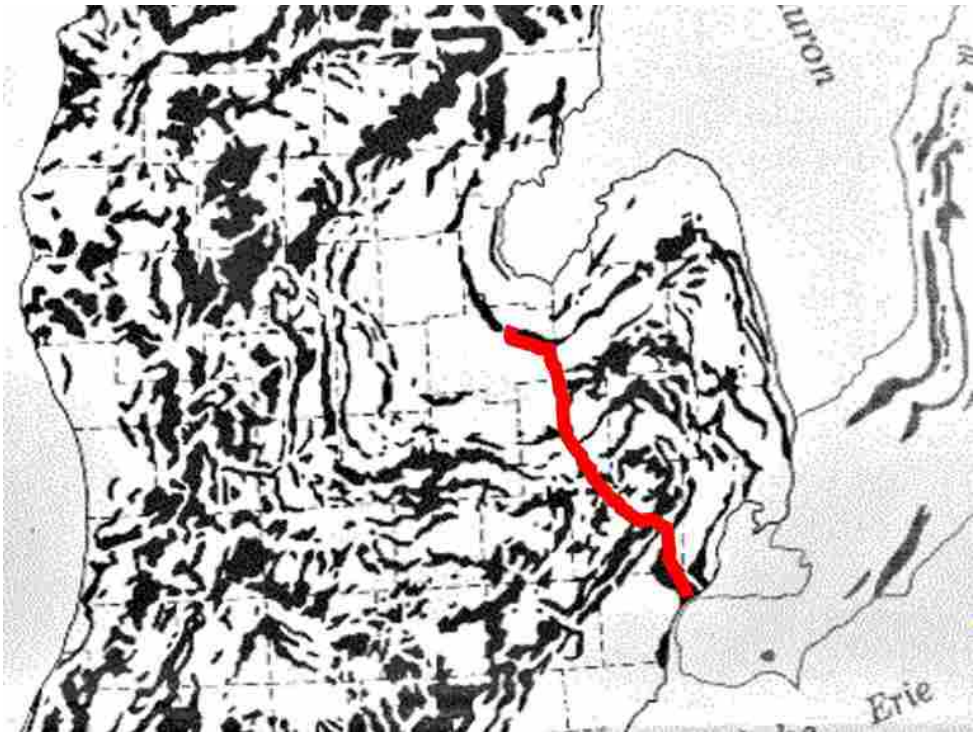
1831 route of Tocqueville and Beaumont from Detroit to Saginaw. State of Michigan.

Their route was mostly the Saginaw Trail

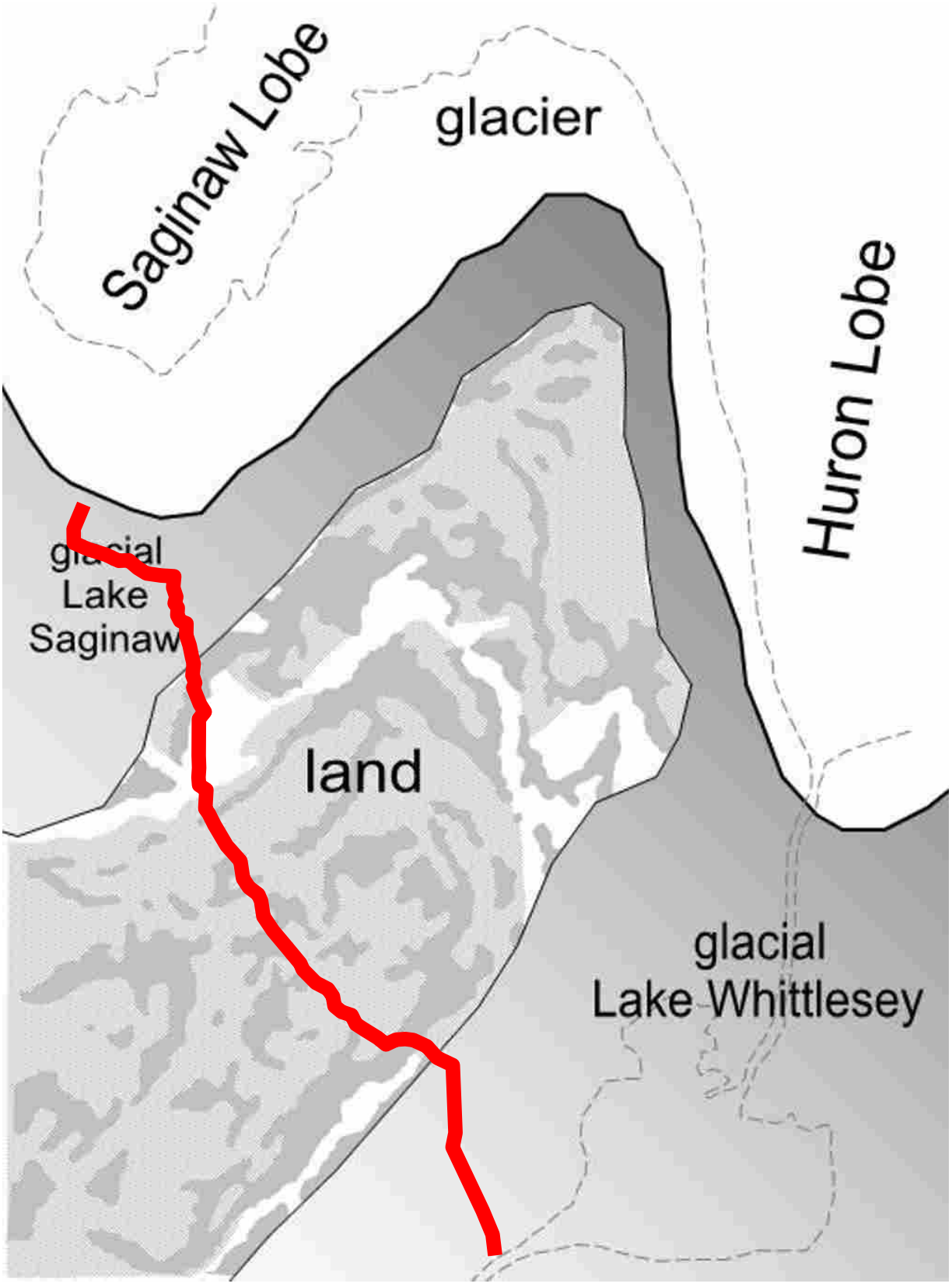
- Basically Woodward Avenue to Dixie Highway
- They deviated from Detroit, going due north to Troy Corners, now the City of Troy.
- Later, their Indian guides led them on a minor trail east of the Saginaw Trail, starting somewhere between present Mount Morris and Clio, apparently in hope that they would sleep for the night in wigwams at a small camp along the Cass River near present Frankenmuth.



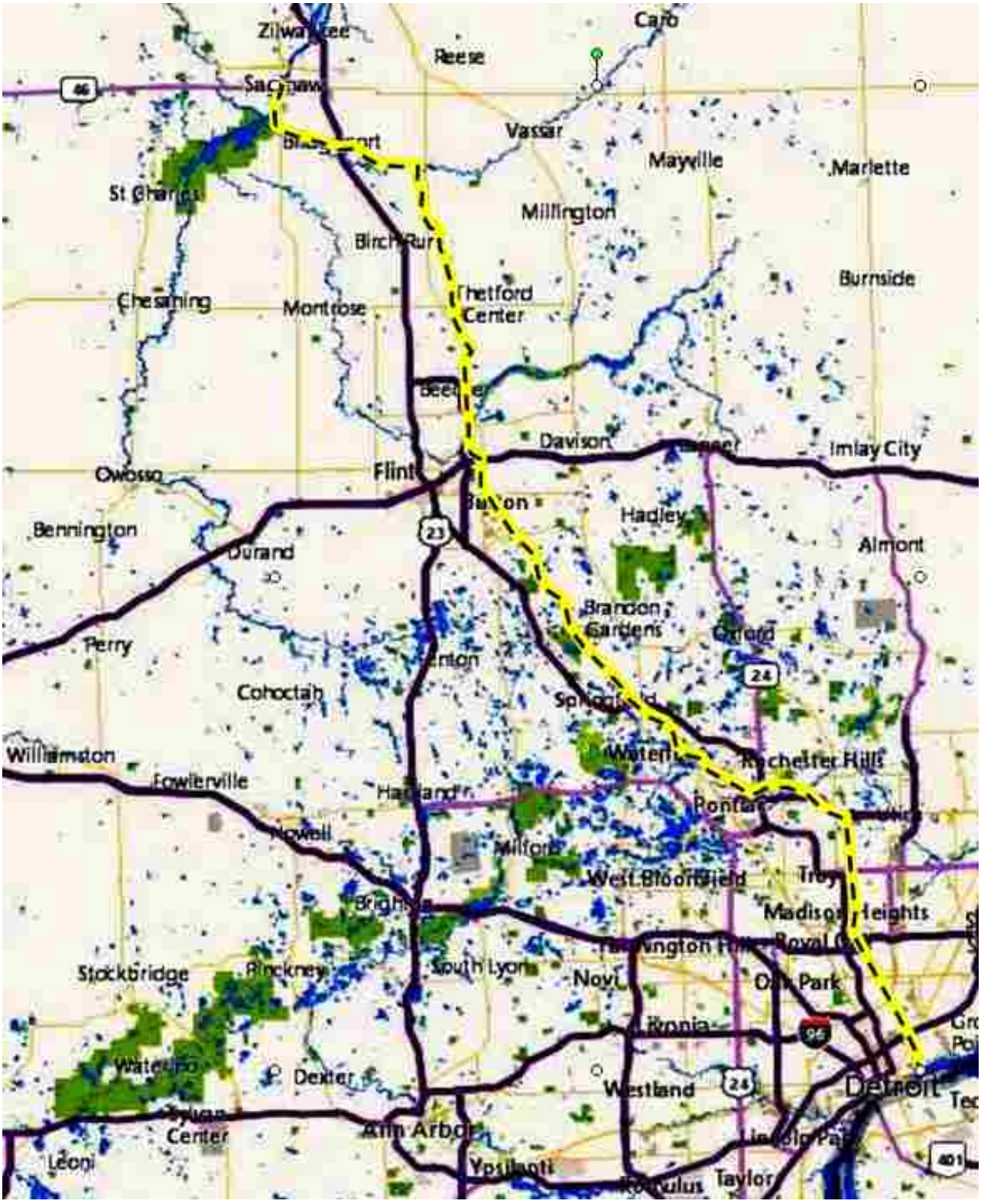
Route on relief map. State of Michigan.



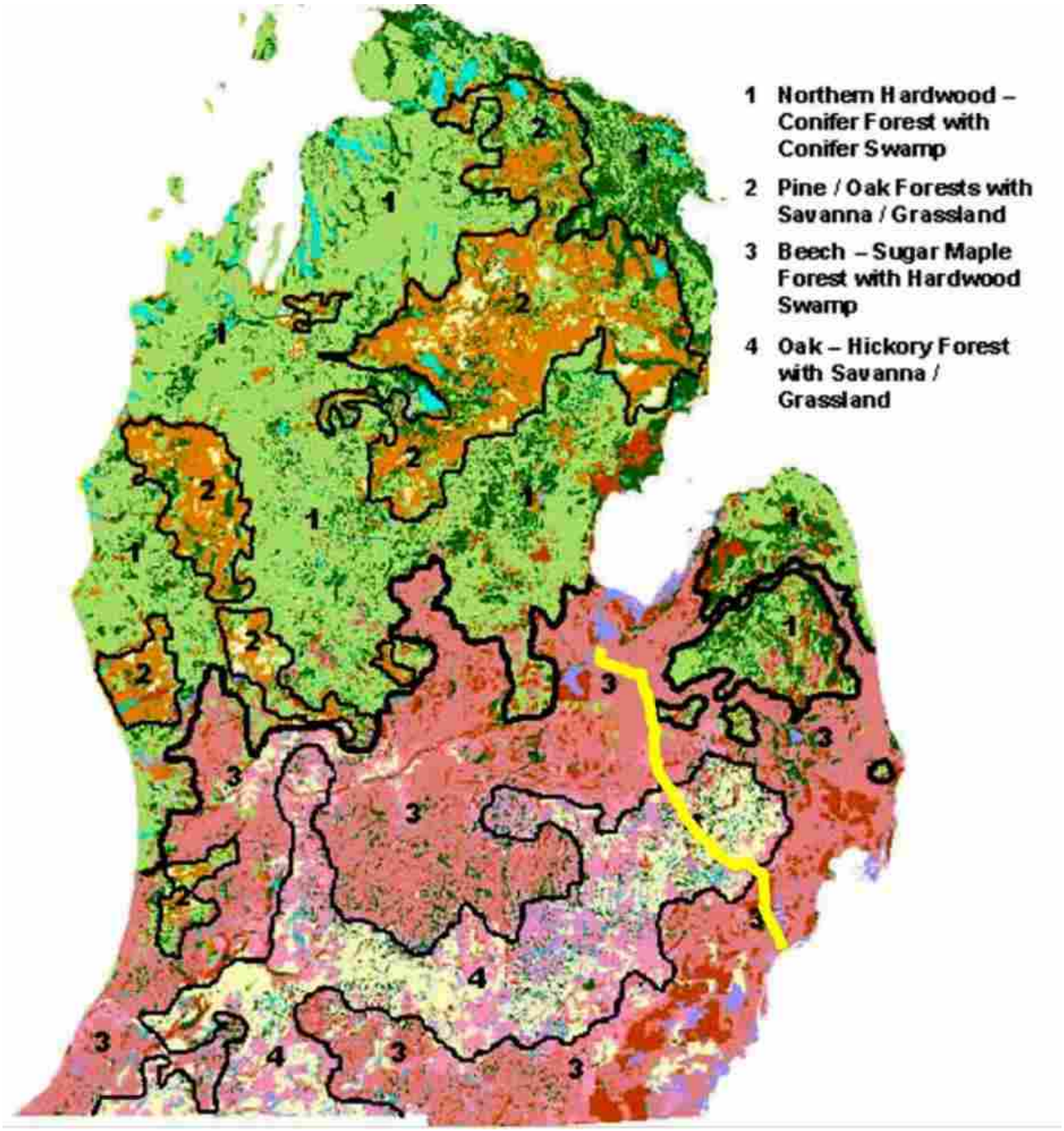
Route on glacial moraine map. Geological Society of America.



Route on map showing Saginaw and Huron Glacial Lobes and glacial lake coverage of the Thumb about 12,000 years ago. Bill Collins.



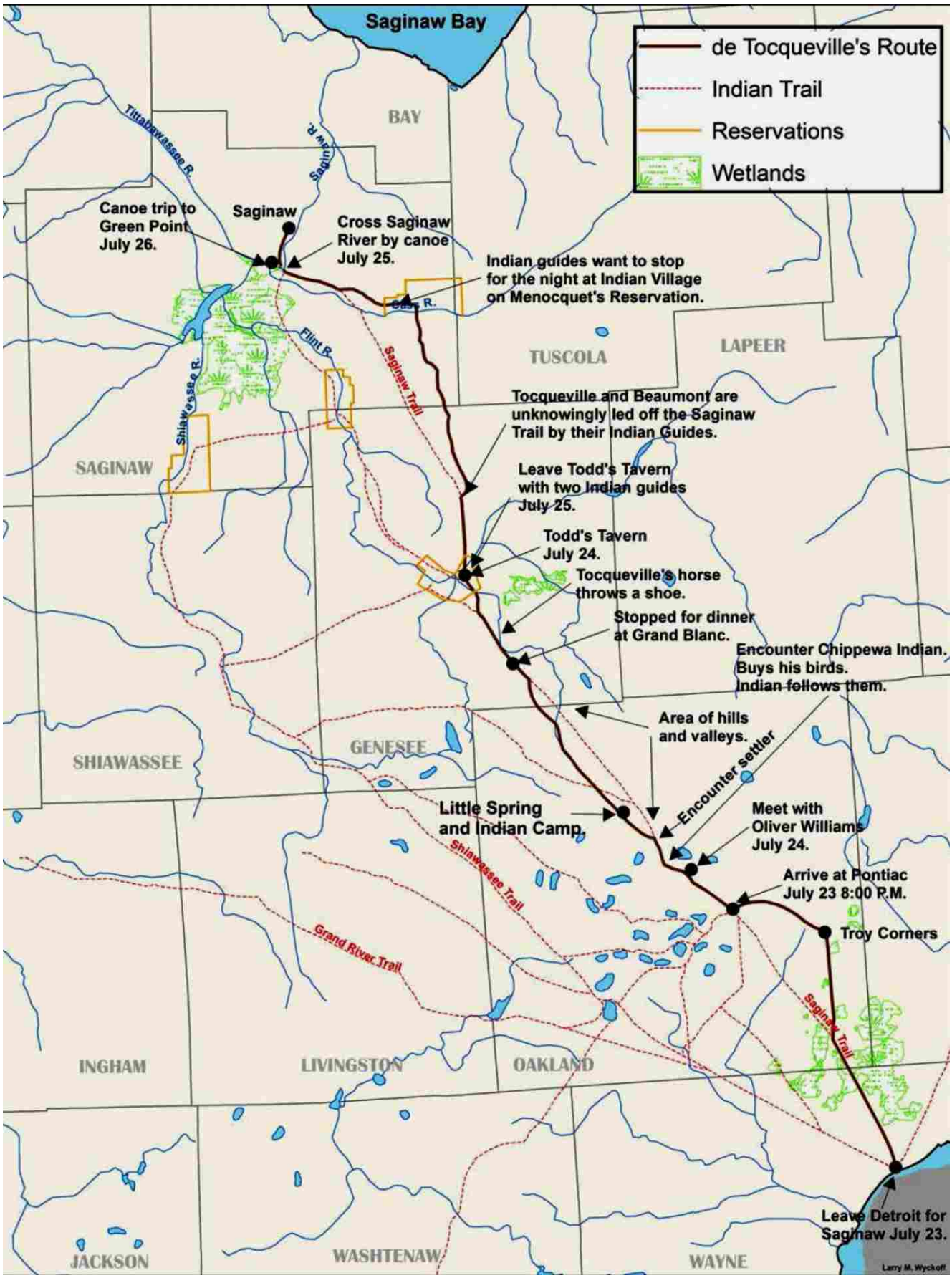
Route on map showing lakes and rivers in blue. Michigan Department of Transportation.



Route on basic vegetation zone map. Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

Their route cut across a good cross-section of landscape and vegetation zones of southeast Michigan

- Glacial lakeplain covered by southern forest of mesic hardwoods, wet-mesic flatwoods, and hardwood swamp in the Detroit area.
- Glacial interlobate hill and lake region covered by southern forest of dry-mesic hardwoods, savanna, and grassland from the Pontiac through Flint area.
- Glacial moraines and outwash plains covered by southern forest of mesic hardwoods, hardwood swamp, mesic to dry-mesic northern hardwoods and conifers, and conifer swamp from the Flint through Bridgeport area.
- Glacial lakeplain covered by lakeplain prairie, marsh, southern forest of mesic hardwoods, and hardwood swamp in the Saginaw area.

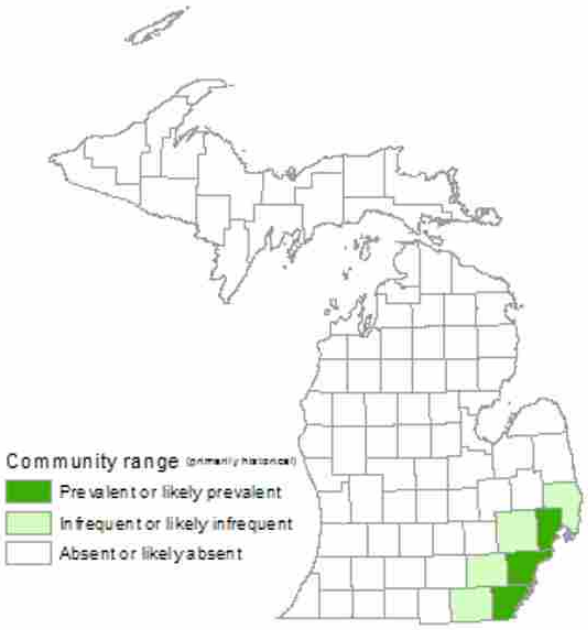


Detailed route map showing Saginaw Trail and notable locations. Larry M. Wyckoff.

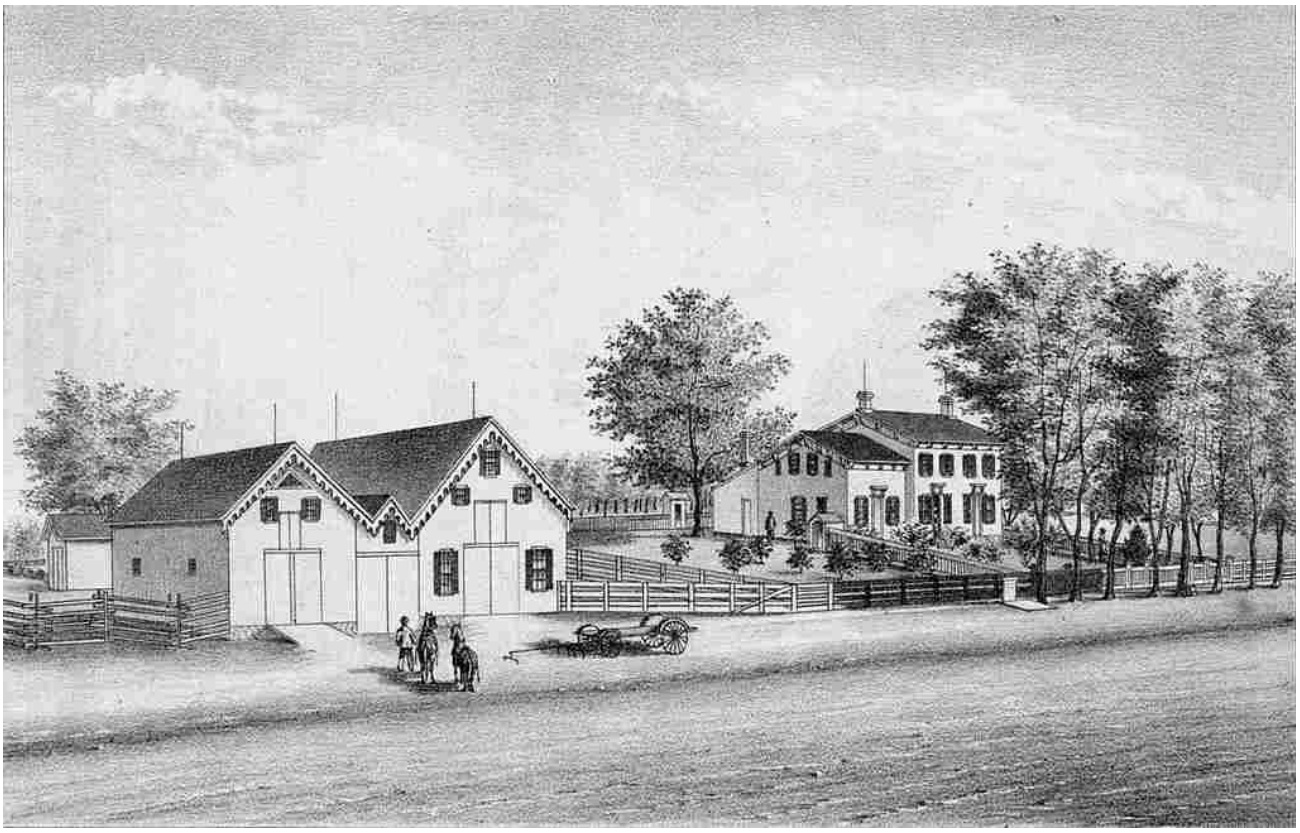
Wet-mesic flatwoods in Armada Township, Macomb County. Bill Collins.

Forest began 1 mile beyond Detroit. Flat and swampy.

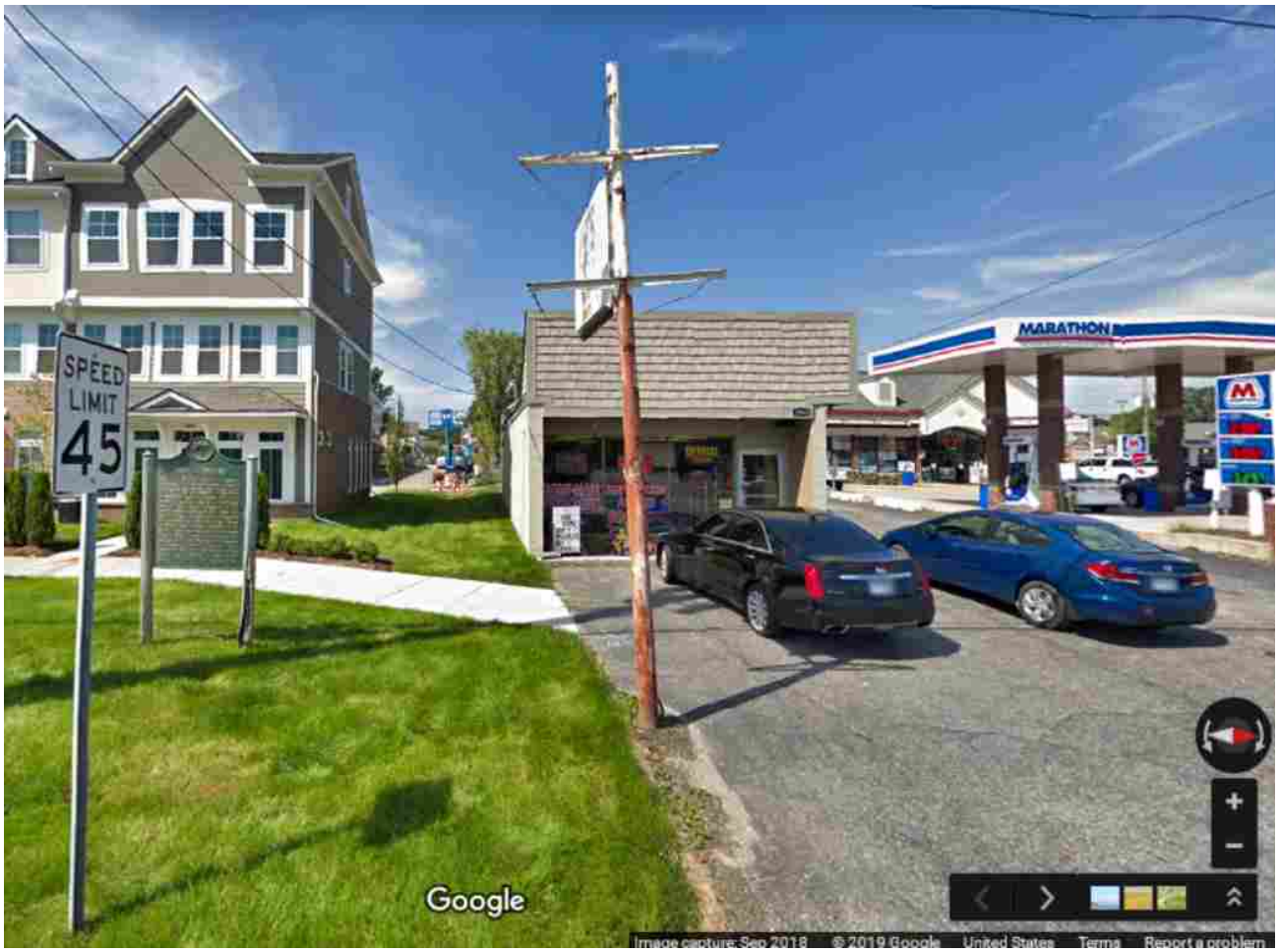
- “One mile from the city the road entered into the forest never to emerge again.”
- “Terrain is perfectly flat and often swampy.”
- Wet-mesic flatwoods: oaks, Shumard’s Oak, hickories, Shellbark Hickory, beech, maples, ash, Pumpkin Ash, basswood.
- The land between Detroit and Royal Oak was called “the swamp”.
- According to a settler account, “the mud [on the Saginaw Trail, later Woodward Avenue] was so deep one span of horses could not draw the wagon through.”



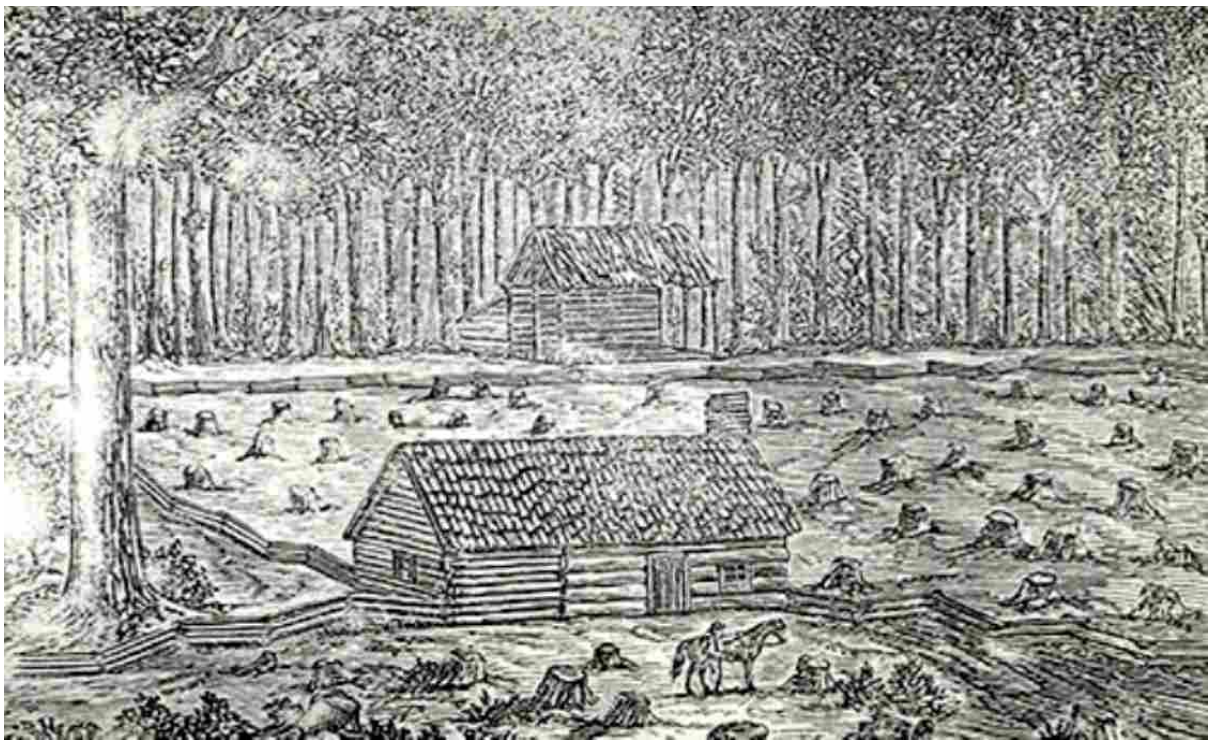
Range map for Wet-mesic flatwoods showing distribution limited largely to Macomb, Wayne, and Monroe Counties. Michigan Natural Features Inventory.



George Niles homestead at Troy Corners, drawn about the same time as when Tocqueville and Beaumont passed. Tocqueville noted an “air of prosperity” in his journal. Artist unknown.



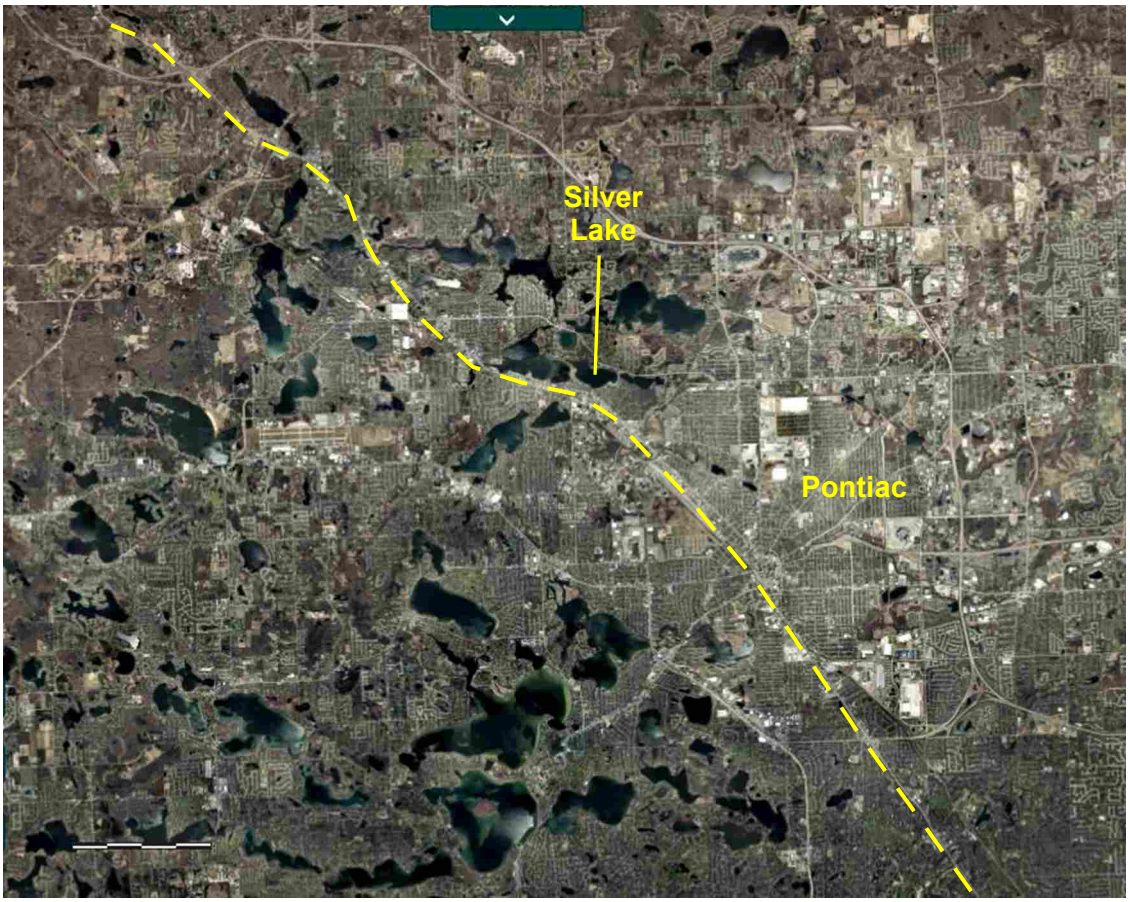
Troy Corners now showing historic marker sign to left. Google Maps.



Drawing by Beaumont of forest clearing, fields, and cabins between Troy and Pontiac.

Lots of new clearings between Detroit and Pontiac

- Clearings, sound of ax, girdled trees.
- Settlers planted corn amongst dead trees and stumps.
- “wheat, oak shoots, plants of all types, weeds of all kinds grow jumbled together and increase together on an intractable and still half-wild ground.”



Aerial photograph showing approximate Saginaw Trail, Pontiac and lakes. Google Maps.

Pontiac inn or tavern host could not believe they wanted to go to Saginaw, except for some big business opportunity

- He said, “Perhaps you have been charged as well by the fur trading company of Canada with establishing a relationship with the Indian tribes of the frontier?”
- Pontiac host suggested they seek travel advice from Major Oliver Williams north of Pontiac on Silver Lake in Waterford.

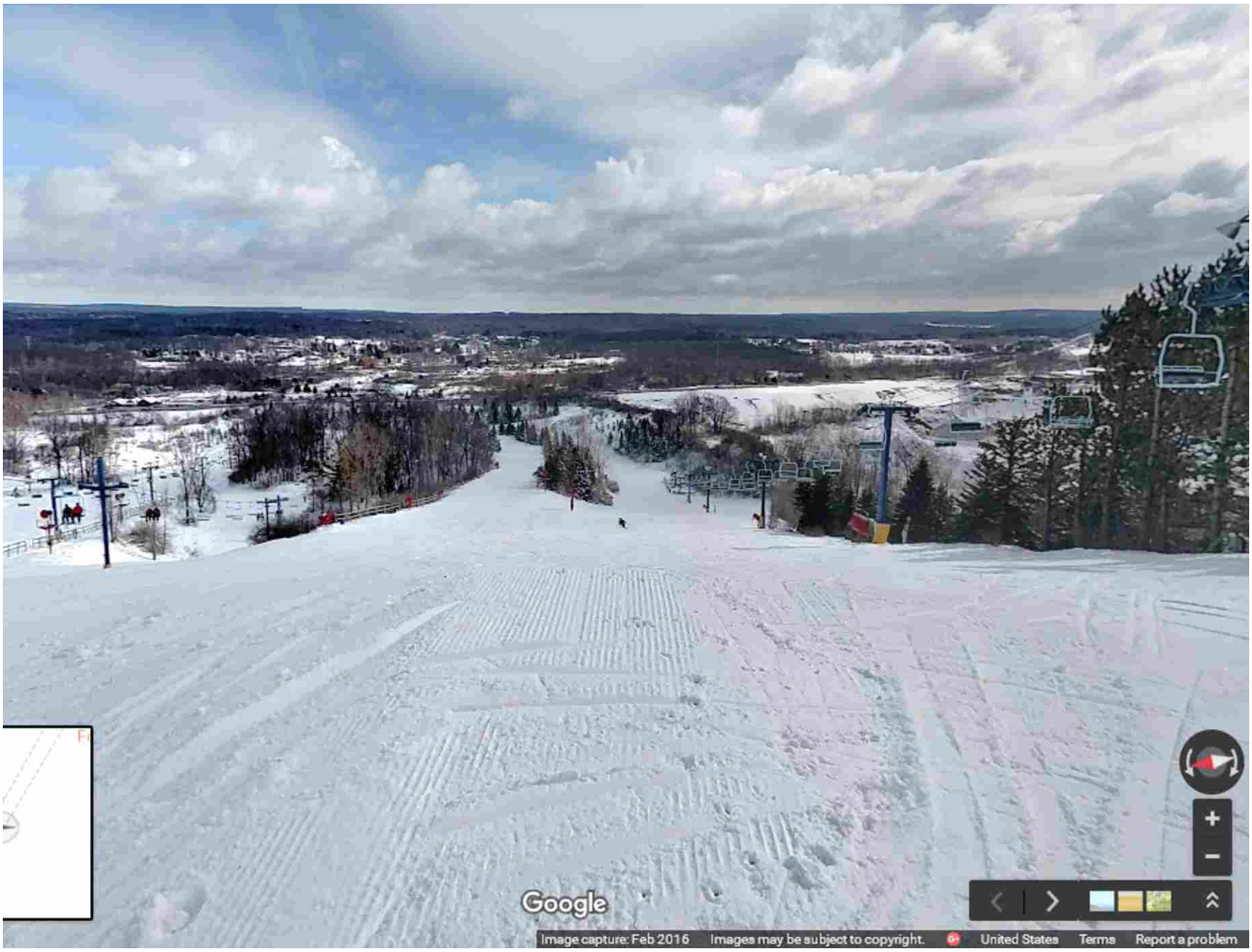
Major Oliver Williams. Artist unknown.

Mr. Williams north of Pontiac gave the first favorable impression of Native Americans

- Williams had long traded in Detroit. 20 years previous he built and sailed a small ship, “Friends Good Will” that was later taken by the British, then captured by the Americans and used in The Battle of Lake Erie.
- “We encountered an old man busy working in a small garden.” He was only 57.
- They asked if they should fear the Native Americans. Williams replied, “No! No! You can go without fear. For my part, I would sleep more tranquilly among Indians than among whites.”
- Tocqueville: “I note this as the first favorable impression that I had received about the Indians since my arrival in America.”
- Oliver Williams and family were friend with Chief Sashabaw. Williams children received Indian names. Children of Jacob Smith, who settled Flint area, also received Indian names, which they later used in court to claim the Indian reservations along the Flint River.
- Williams had two sons in the Saginaw region. Ephraim Williams wrote “Personal Reminiscence” and confirmed his father’s opinion of Native Americans: “The Indians were kind and very friendly during our sickness, bringing us many luxuries in the shape of wild meat and berries of the choicest kind.”

Beautiful region of lakes north of Pontiac. Tranquil solitude, but already impacted by settlers

“From time to time a small lake (this district is full of them) appeared like a sheet of silver beneath the forest foliage. It is difficult to imagine the charm that surrounds these lovely places where man has not settled and where a profound peace and an uninterrupted silence still reign. I have traveled in the Alps through dreadful, isolated areas where nature rejects the labor of man, but displays even in its very horrors a grandeur that transports and grips the soul. Here the solitude is not less profound, but it does not produce the same impressions. The only sentiments that you feel while traveling through these flowered wilderness areas where, as in Milton’s *Paradise,* everything is prepared to receive man, are a tranquil admiration, a mild melancholy, a vague disgust with civilized life; a sort of wild instinct that makes you think with pain that soon this delicious solitude will have changed face. Already in fact the white race advances across the surrounding woods and, in a few years, the European will have cut the trees that are reflected in the clear waters of the lake and forced the animals that populate its shores to withdraw toward new wilderness areas.”



View east from atop Mount Holly ski hill at approximately 1,240 feet above sea level. Google Maps.

Very hilly region north of lakes

- Waterford to Clarkston to Holly (east) to Grand Blanc.
- High elevations range from about 900 to over 1,200 feet at Mount Holly.
- “… cut by hills and valleys. Several of these hills presented the most wild appearance.”

View from atop Pine Knob ski hill near Clarkston at approximately 1,280 feet above sea level. Diana Casetti Photography and Video.

Burned forest ground, possibly savanna, covered by dense ferns

Bracken Fern stand under light tree canopy in northern Michigan. Martin LaBar.

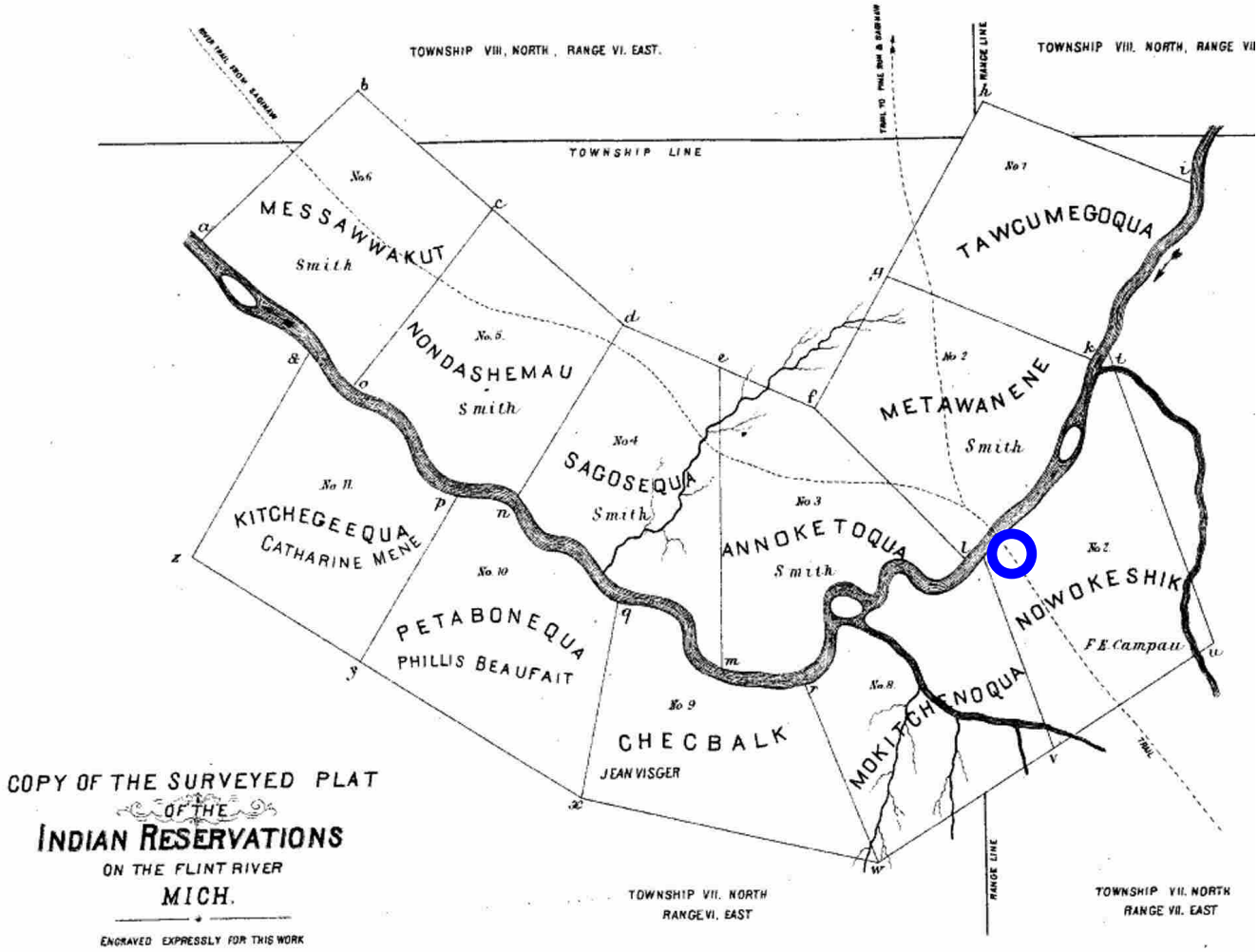
Moonlit stream valley surrounded by dark forest

- Tocqueville impressed by Thread Creek, south of Flint River, at night.
- "… valley an immense arena surrounded on all sides by the foliage of the woods like a black curtain … center the light of the moon … no noise whatsoever, no sound of life arose from this solitude."

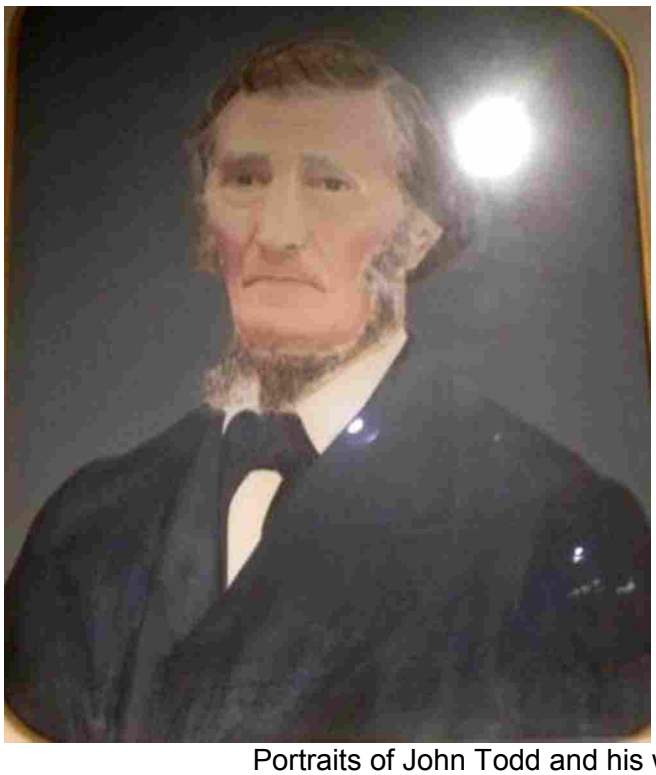
Arrival at Flint River and Trinc the bear

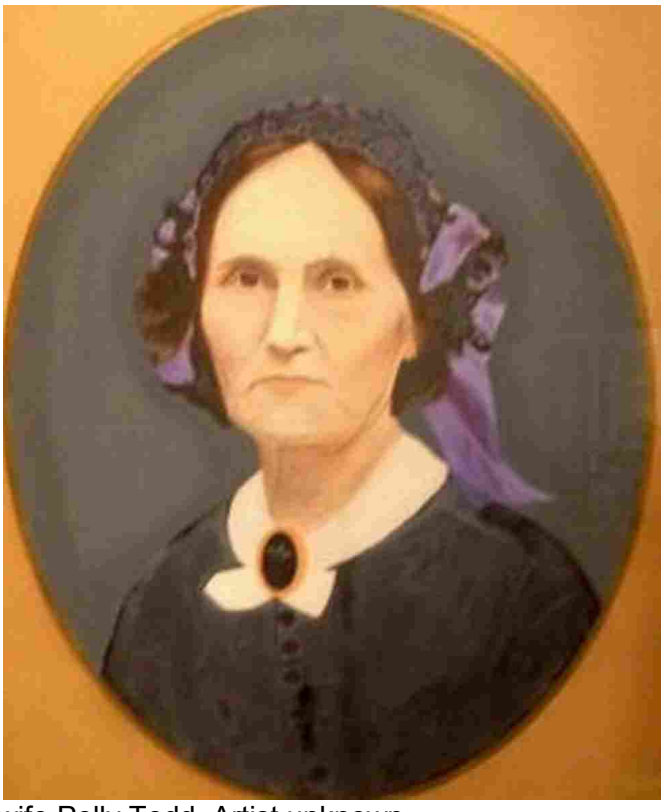
'The river that extended like a purple thread to the end of the valley conclusively proved to us that we had arrived at *Flint River.* Soon in fact the barking of dogs made the woods echo, and we found ourselves before a *log house* separated from us by a single fence. As we prepared to cross it, the moon revealed to us on the other side a large black bear standing upright on its paws and pulling on its chain, indicating as clearly as it could its intention to give us a very fraternal embrace. "What the devil is this country," I said, "where you have bears as watchdogs." "We must call," my companion replied to me. "If we try to cross the fence, we will have difficulty explaining the reason to the gatekeeper." So we shouted out so loudly and so well that a man finally appeared at the window. After examining us in the moonlight: "Come in, Sirs," he said to us; "Trinc, go lie down. To your kennel, I tell you. They are not robbers." The bear waddled away and we entered. We were half-dead with fatigue. We asked our host if we could have some oats. Surely, he said; he immediately began to reap the closest field with all American calm and doing it as he would have in full day.'

- The bear's name, "Trinc", is interesting. The bear was most likely a cub when it became a pet. If received from Native Americans in trade or a gift, the name may be derived from "trinket". "Trinc" also means "drink" or "drinking" in German, and the first European settler at this location on the Flint River was Jacob Smith, who was descended from a German family.
- The man that took them in was probably John Todd. About a year later, he established Todd's Tavern at the same location. Todd was about the 4th or 5th owner of the land after Jacob Smith died in 1825.
- The Todd land was originally part of 11 Indian reservations, most claimed in a round-about way by Jacob Smith. There was a long complicated legal battle after Smith died to distribute his land to heirs. Whether he had legal possession of the Indian reservations is very questionable, but his son-in-law, major John Garland, took possession of the reservations after his death "on behalf of his heirs" and controlled the distribution to some extent. Garland allotted one of the reservations to "Francois Edouard Campau, a half-breed son of Barney Campau". According to the Treaty of 1819, the reservations were to pass to owners of Indian ancestry. Jacob Smith participated in the Treaty of 1819 and soon after, settled on one of the reservations along the Flint River. The treaty specified that the reservations would pass specifically to the Indian names given to Jacob Smith's children by his Indian "friends". Whether the signers of the treaty realized the reservations would actually be distributed to non-Indian heirs is unclear, but likely. Legal dispute over this land continued for decades and delayed development of the area until after the Civil War.

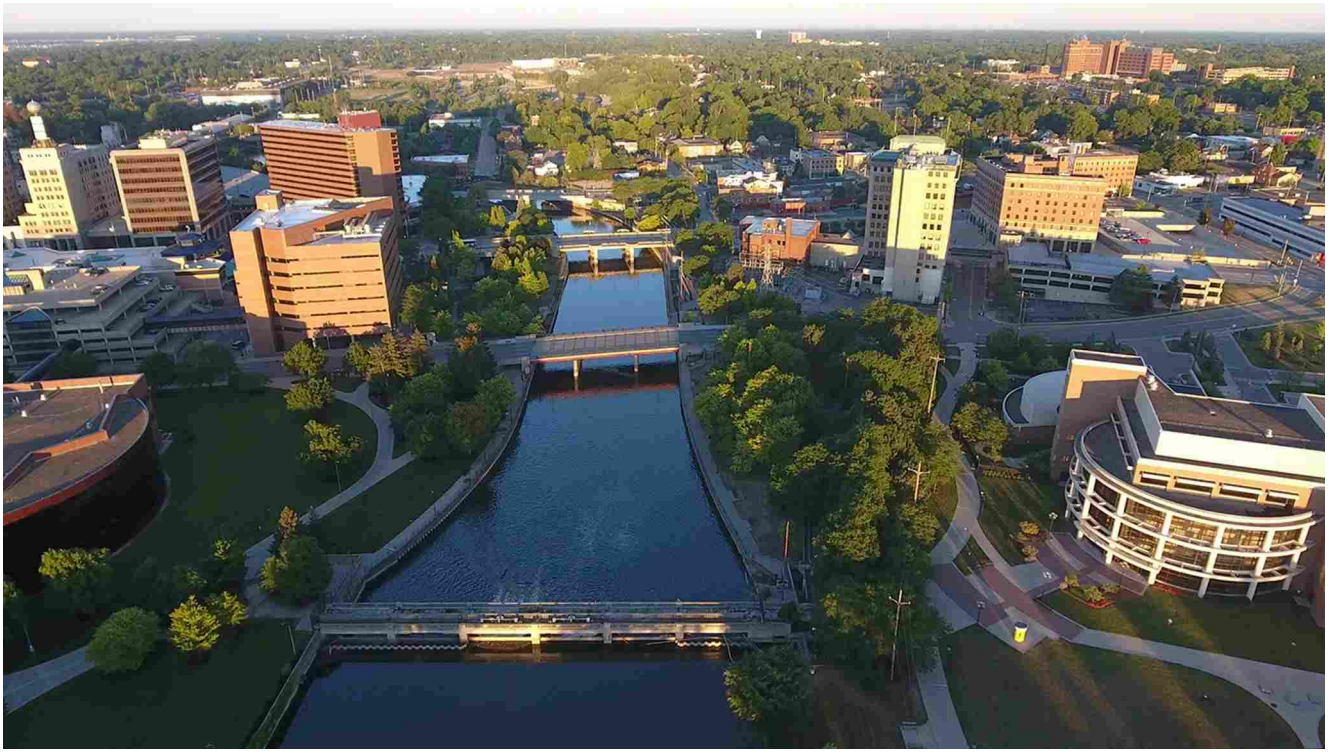


Map of Flint River Indian reservations. Location of Todd settlement at blue circle. State of Michigan.





Portraits of John Todd and his wife Polly Todd. Artist unknown.



View east of Flint River now showing approximate location of Todd settlement on the right near the middle bridge.Mayberry Media. Mott Foundation.

A wilderness of fifteen leagues (45 miles) separates Flint River from Saginaw. Native American guides 13 and 18 on foot

- "Sagan-Cuisco" was the name of the older Indian guide. These boys were nearly the first relatively undisturbed Native Americans they encountered in North America, the first being the day before somewhere between Pontiac and the Flint River.
- The Indian boys were followed by a small fox-like dog with upright ears (see Beaumont's drawing of the forest scene). Maybe like a heeler breed popular with Amish and country folk.
- Tocqueville and Beaumont wanted to pay the guides. Todd(?) said that Indians don't know the value of money and suggested they give him $2 and he would buy something of that value for them. He bought a handkerchief and a pair of moccasins, worth probably less than $1.

"Next to him [Sagan-Cuisco], as if to complete the picture, walked a dog with upright ears, elongated muzzle, much more like a fox than any other type of animal, and whose fierce appearance was in perfect harmony with the countenance of the man leading it. After examining our new companion with an attention that he did not appear to notice for a single moment, we asked him what he wanted from us as the price for the service that he was going to give us. The Indian answered with a few words in his language and the American, hastening to speak, informed us that what the savage asked could be evaluated at two dollars. "Since these poor Indians," our host added charitably, "do not know the value of money, you will give me the dollars and I will gladly take charge of providing him the equivalent." I was curious to see what the worthy man called the equivalent of two dollars, and I followed him quietly into the place where the market was. I saw him deliver to our guide a pair of moccasins and a pocket handkerchief, objects whose total value certainly did not amount to half of the sum. The Indian withdrew very satisfied and I fled silently, saying like La Fontaine: Ah! if lions knew how to paint!
Moreover, it is not only Indians that the American pioneers take for fools. We ourselves were victims every day of their extreme greed for profit. It is very true that they do not steal. That have too much enlightenment to commit something so imprudent, but nonetheless I have never seen an innkeeper of a large city overcharge with more shamelessness than these inhabitants of the wilderness among whom I imagined to find primitive honesty and the simplicity of patriarchal mores."

Native American guides saw animals long before Tocqueville and Beaumont

- Saginaw Trail a “narrow path, scarcely recognizable by sight.”
- They sometimes led Tocqueville and Beaumont by the hand “like children” to show objects they saw for a long time before.

Description of virgin primeval forest. Chaotic under tall canopy

“In the middle of a not very dense thicket, through which objects at a fairly great distance could be seen, a tall cluster of trees composed almost totally of pines and oaks arose in a single burst. Forced to grow on a very limited terrain almost entirely without the rays of the sun, each of these trees goes up rapidly in order to find air and light. As straight as the mast of a ship, each tree does not take long to rise above everything that surrounds it. Having reached an upper region, it then tranquilly spreads its branches and surrounds itself with their shade.”

“Near the earth everything presents on the contrary the image of confusion and of chaos. Some trunks, incapable of bearing their branches any longer, have split halfway from the top and no longer present anything to view except a sharp and broken tip. Others, shaken for a long time by the wind, have been thrown whole onto the ground; torn out of the earth, their roots form like so many natural ramparts behind which several men could easily take shelter. Immense trees, held up by the branches that surround them, rest suspended in air and fall into dust without touching the earth. Among us, there is no country, no matter how unpopulated, in which a forest is left alone enough for the trees, after tranquilly following their course, to fall finally due to decrepitude. It is man who strikes them in their prime and who rids the forest of their remains. Our woods always present the image of youth or of strength. In the forests of the New World, on the contrary, you see trees of all ages, from the weakest shoot to the hundred-year-old oak.”

“They fall, they accumulate on each other; time cannot reduce them to dust quickly enough to prepare new places. There side by side several generations of dead trees are found lying together. Some at the last stage of decay no longer offer anything to view except a long line of red dust drawn on the grass. But others, already half-consumed by time, still preserve their forms. There are some finally that, just fallen, still spread their long branches on the ground and halt the steps of the traveler with an obstacle that he had not expected. Amid these divers remains, the work of reproduction goes on without ceasing. Shoots, climbing plants, weeds of all types grow up across all the obstacles. They creep along the fallen trunks; they worm into their dust; they lift up and break the bark that still covers them.”

Profound calm and serenity of mid-day forest

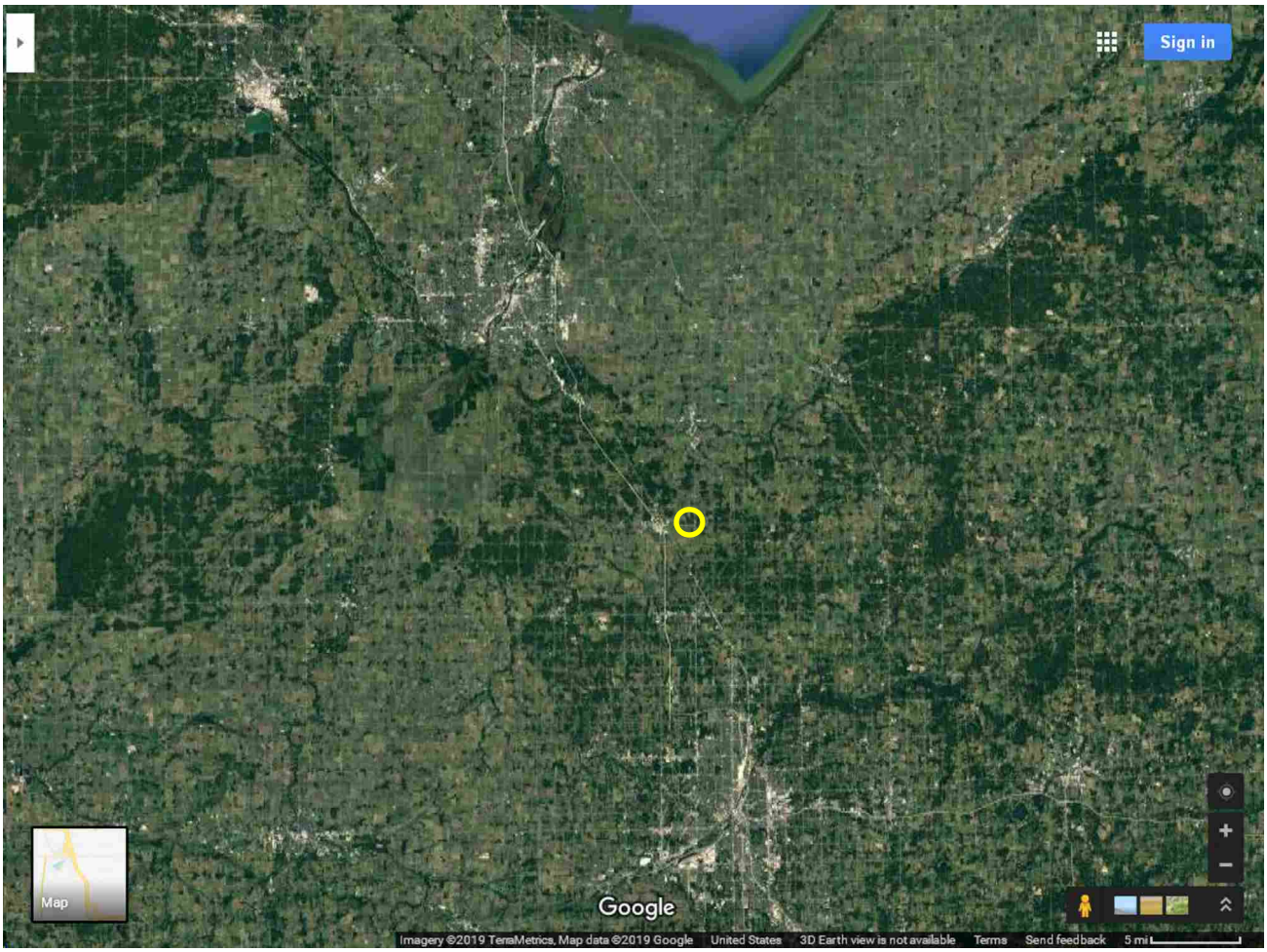
“When at midday the rays of the sun beat down on the forest, you often hear echoing in its depths something like a long moan, a plaintive cry that lingers in the distance. It is the final effort of the wind that is expiring. Then everything around you falls into a silence so profound, an immobility so complete that your soul feels penetrated by a sort of religious terror. The traveler stops, he looks around. Pressed together, intertwined in their branches, the trees of the forest seem to form only a single whole, an immense and indestructible edifice, under whose vaults reigns an eternal darkness. In no matter which direction he looks, he sees only a field of violence and destruction. Broken trees, torn trunks, everything announces that here the elements are perpetually at war. But the struggle is interrupted. You would say that at the order of a supernatural power, movement is suddenly halted. Half-broken branches still seem to hold on by a few hidden bonds to the trunk that no longer offers them support; trees already uprooted have not had the time to come to earth and remain suspended in the air. The traveler listens, he holds his breath with fear the better to grasp the slightest reverberation of existence; no sound, no murmur is heard.”

Even remote forest in Europe interrupted by sounds of human habitation, but not here

- In Europe are heard a “church tower, step of a traveler, ax of the woodsman, explosion of a firearm, barking of a dog” in even remote areas. But in this Michigan wilderness, a profound silence.

Sense of disorientation and isolation greater in the forest than the open ocean

“On the sea at least the traveler contemplates a vast horizon toward which he directs his view with hope. But in this ocean of leaves, who can point out the road? Toward which objects to turn your eyes? In vain do you go up to the top of the largest trees; others still higher surround you. It is useless to climb hills; everywhere the forest seems to move with you, and this same forest extends before you from the Arctic Pole to the Pacific Ocean.”



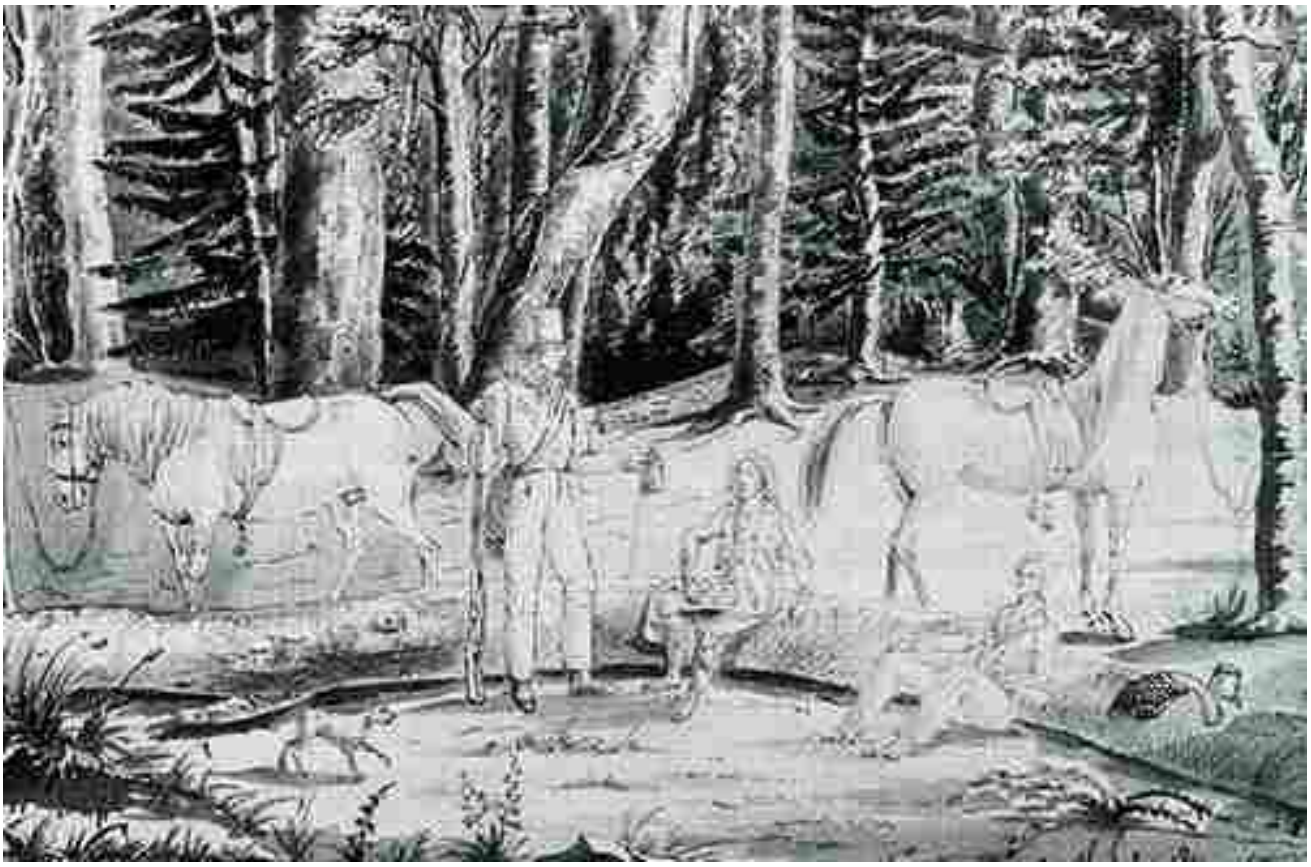
Mid-point between Flint River and Saginaw is east of the Birch Run area, near yellow circle, in mixed northern hardwood and conifer forest that still covers the sand soils. Google Maps.

Mid-point between Flint River (Miché-Conté-Ouinque) and Saginaw

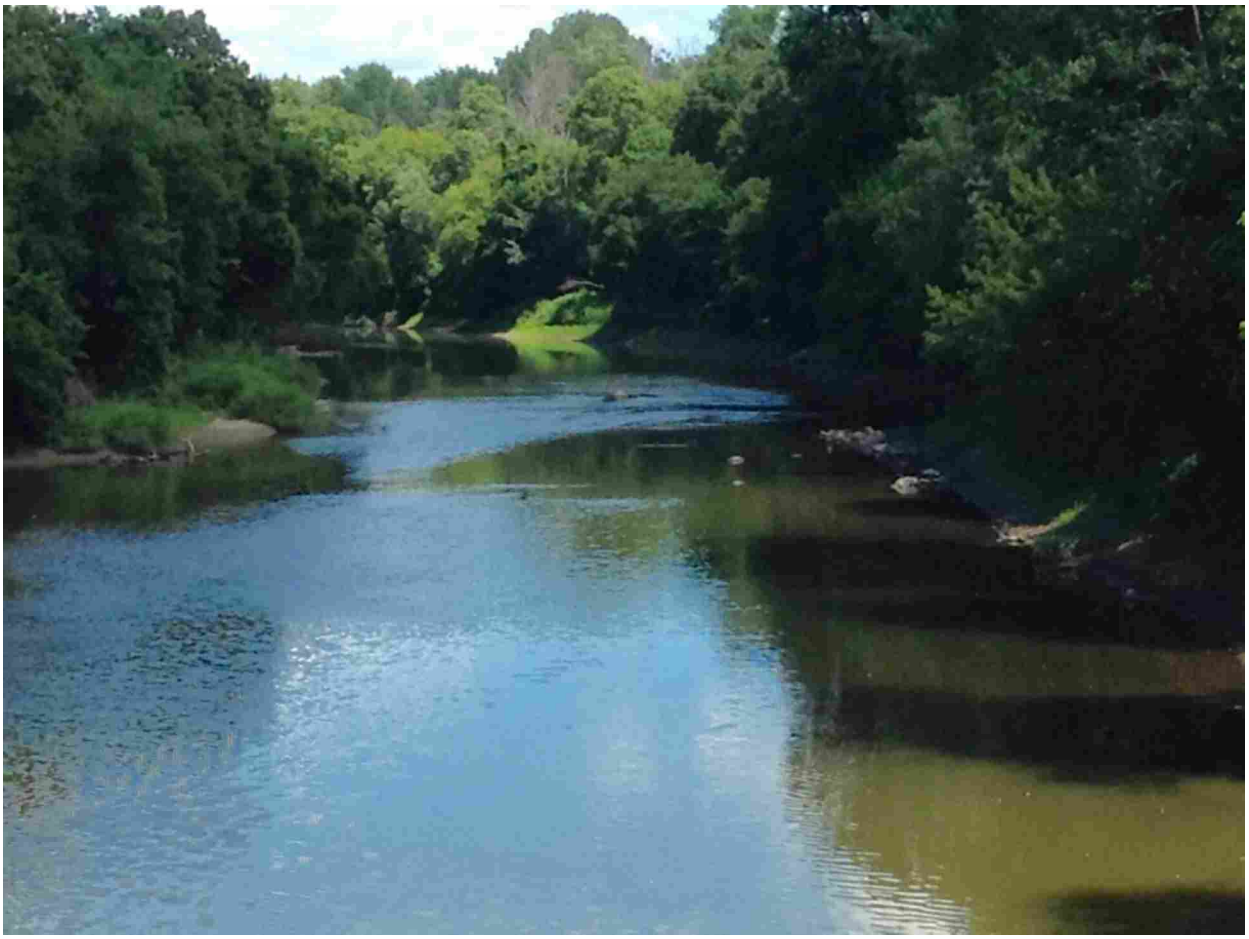
- Sagan-Cuisco drew a line in the sand.
- Miché-Conté-Ouinque (*Flint River)* and Saginaw.
- Made a dot in the middle of the line.
- Mid-point between Flint River and Saginaw is east of the Birch Run area.
- Area covered by mixed northern hardwood and conifer forest (Eastern White Pine, Eastern Hemlock, Red Maple, Yellow Birch, Paper Birch, …) on sand soils.

Guides selected drinking water from pit of fallen tree

- Probably shallow ground water in sandy soil.
- Cleaner water than a creek, river, or lake.
- Tip-up mounds and pits more common in sandy soils, another indicator they were likely in mixed northern hardwood and conifer forest.



Drawing by Beaumont of the travel party near the north side of Cass River
Left to right: horse, Sagan-Cuisco's dog, Tocqueville, Sagan-Cuisco, horse, and Beaumont.
Missing is the younger Native American guide, possibly at the nearby Indian camp.



Cass River near their crossing point headed to Saginaw. Cass River Water Trail.

Trail by thickets and tree trunks north of Cass River

- Field of corn near wigwams.
- "Most profound solitude".

Bizarre and chaotic appearance, darkness, and silence of forest at night

- "Silence of the forest seemed so fearsome to us".
- "Buzzing of mosquitoes".
- Firefly crossing the woods

Aerial photograph of south Saginaw Showing approximate arrival and crossing point at Saginaw River, just north of the Cass River confluence near the center of the photograph. Google Maps.

Saginaw River near arrival point showing upstream stretch in Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, possibly where they canoed upstream to shoot ducks. US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Arrival at Saginaw River

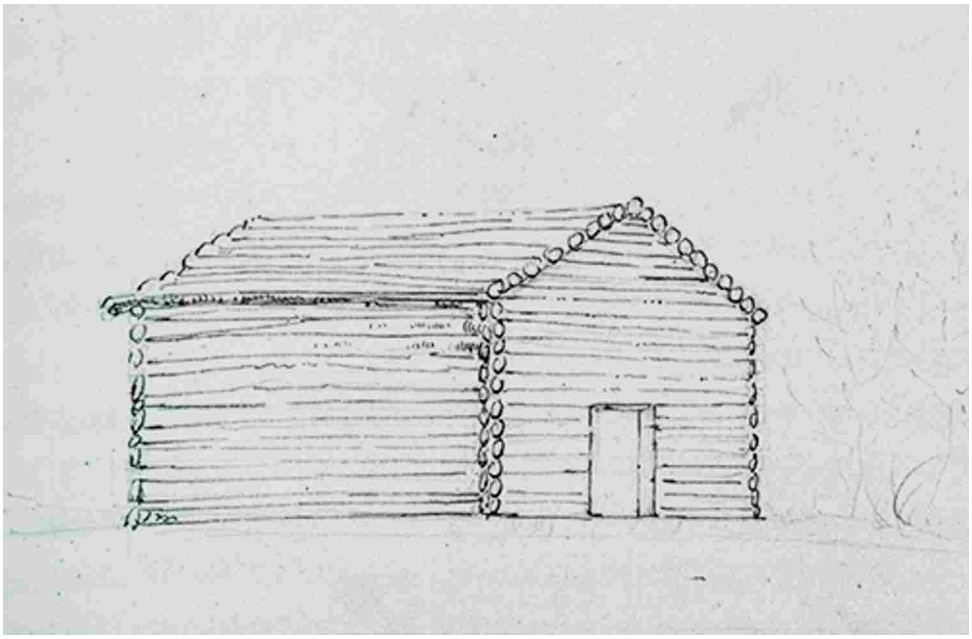
- Indian guides shouted and a canoe soon arrived. They were shocked to hear the paddler speak Norman French.
- The canoe paddler described himself as a "*bois-brulé* " (burnt wood or forest, probably refers to a region in Canada), or son of a Canadian man and Indian woman.
- While paddling back across the Saginaw River, he sang in a low voice an old French tune, "*Between Paris and Saint-Denis … There was a girl"*.

Scene of moonlight on Saginaw River as canoe crossed with horse

- Tocqueville more than once struck by scene of moonlight on water.
- His senses likely intensified by feeling he was at the edge of remote wilderness.

Mosquitoes

- "Never a torment [similar]" to mosquitoes, particularly at Saginaw.



Drawing by Beaumont of cabin at Saginaw.

Typical wigwams showing a teepee-like wigwam described at Saginaw. Kristy Rolig, Pinterest.

Saginaw settlement on the prairie

- Prairie, river, distant forest, few cabins, few wigwams
- Wigwams were conical teepee-like (summer structures?). Smoke to keep mosquitoes away or cooking or smoking fish?
- They apparently recognized prairie, were able to distinguish it from old-field.
- Lakeplain prairie near the Saginaw Bay. Vegetation controlled largely by fluctuating levels of the Great Lakes. Too wet for trees and most shrubs some years. Burned in low-water and dry years.

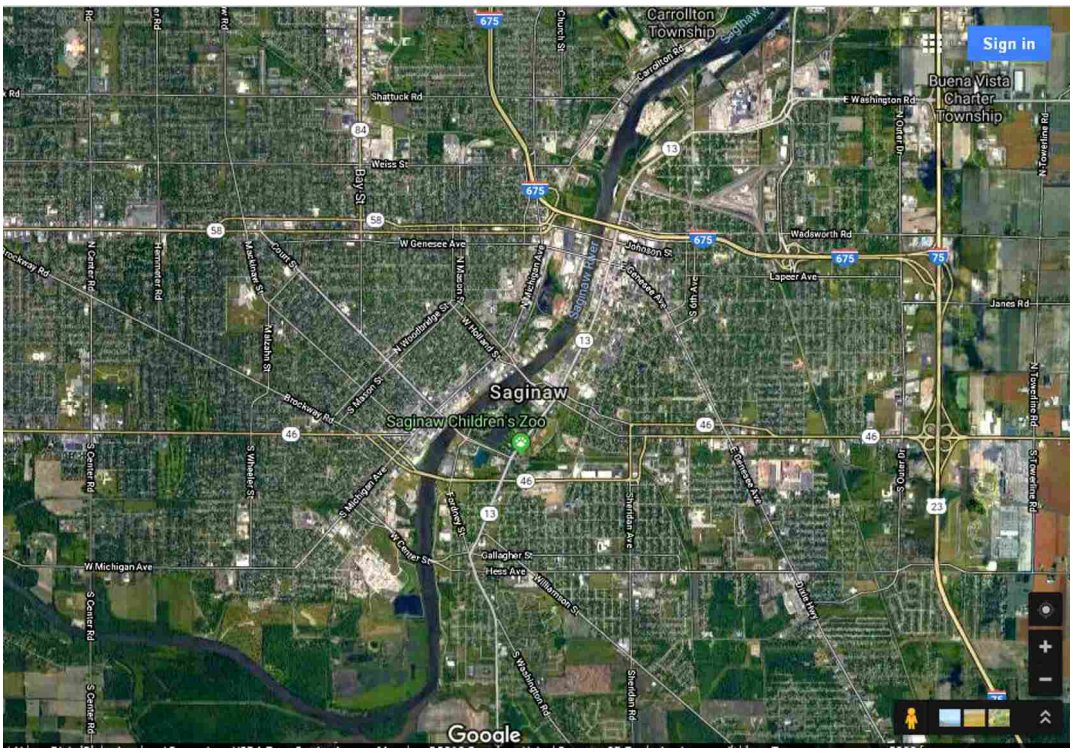
Saginaw inhabited by 30 people of various origins

- "No common bond" of settlers there.
- "Canadians, Americans, Indians and half-breeds".

Up the Saginaw River to shoot ducks

Peaceful rivers through the forest wilderness

- "To have an idea of forests of the New World, necessary to follow the rivers".



Aerial photograph showing present Saginaw. Google Maps.

Prediction of industry on the Saginaw. Bittersweet natural beauty destined for destruction

"In a few years these impenetrable forests will have fallen. The noise of civilization and industry will break the silence of the Saginaw. Its echo will become silent.... Wharves will imprison its banks. Its waters that today flow ignored and tranquil amid a nameless wilderness will be forced back in their course by the prow of ships."

"It is this idea of destruction, this lurking thought of a near and inevitable change that, according to us, gives to the wilderness of America so original a character and so touching a beauty. You see it with a melancholy pleasure; you hurry in a way to admire it. The idea of this natural and wild grandeur that is going to end mingles with the magnificent images given birth by the triumphant march of civilization. You feel proud to be a man, and at the same time you feel I do not know what bitter regret about the power that God granted us over nature. The soul is agitated by contrasting ideas, sentiments, but all the impressions that it receives are great and leave a profound trace."

Tallgrass prairie showing typical height of Big Bluestem Grass and Cord Grass.
Melodie Seto, The Millbrook Times, Millbrook, Ontario, Canada.

Recently farmed lakeplain prairie, now fallow, northwest of Bay City near the Kawkawlin River.
White Oak dominated beach ridge in background. Bill Collins.

Lakeplain prairie with shrub and tree encroachment located near Quanicassee in Fish Point State Wildlife Area, showing Blazing Star, Riddell's Goldenrod, and Cord Grass. Bill Collins.

Hunting in the Saginaw prairie

- "Prairies not swampy".
- "Wide plains where there are no trees".
- "Grass is hard and three to four feet high".
- "Little game".
- Vegetation of Saginaw Bay lakeplain prairie includes Big Bluestem, Cord Grass, Indian Grass, Riddell's Goldenrod, Blazing Star, Sullivant's Milkweed, Prairie Fringed Orchid.

Massasauga rattlesnake showing lighter color of younger snake. Nick Scobel.

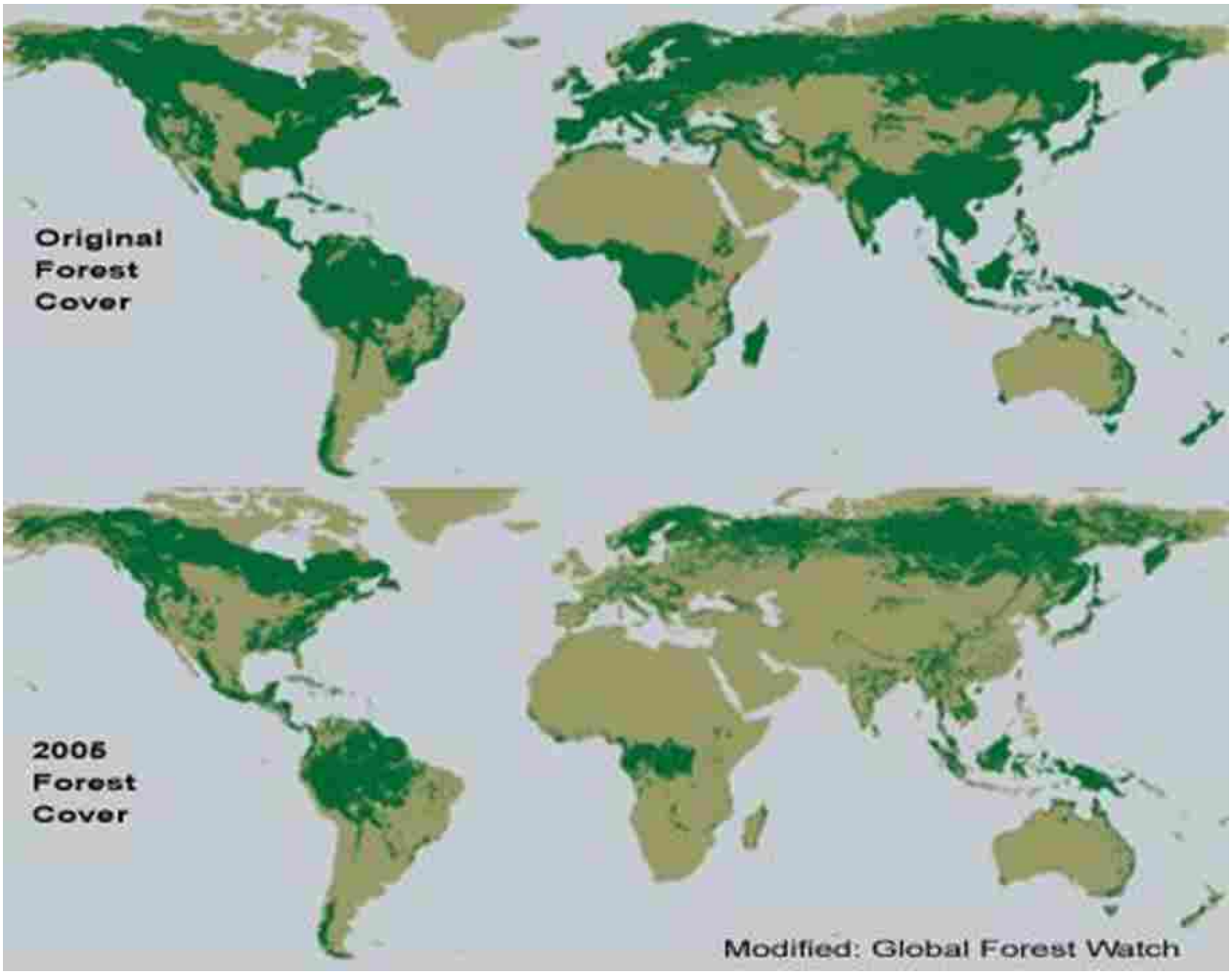
Massasauga rattlesnake showing darker color of older snake. Nick Scobel.

Massasauga rattlesnakes in the prairie

- Canadian followed same path in prairie to avoid Massasauga rattlesnakes.
- "What the devil. Are there rattlesnakes here?" "Oh yes indeed," replied my American Norman with an imperturbable sang-froid, *"the prairie is full of them."*
- I asked him if the bite of the rattlesnake was fatal. He answered that you always died from it in less than twenty-four hours, if you did not appeal to the Indians. They know a remedy that, given in time, saved the patient, he said.
- Today, Massasauga rattlesnake bites are said to be rarely fatal and more like a sever bee sting. It seems so many settlers of the Michigan wilderness had some business racket. Was fatality of the Massasauga bite more a myth and a way for Native Americans to get something?

Nighttime lightning storm along the Saginaw

- Like moonlight on water, it seems the lightning effects left an impression on Tocqueville.



Map of historic forest cover showing that Tocqueville was correct in his understanding that forest extended from their location to the arctic to the Pacific Ocean and beyond, indicating that he was well educated or very perceptive. Global Forest Watch.

Remote feeling of Saginaw, departure, and the Cass River

- "Forest surrounded us from Pole to Pacific Ocean".
- Tocqueville correct in his understanding that forest extended from their location to the arctic to the Pacific Ocean and beyond, indicating he was well educated or very perceptive.
- "Abandoned wigwam at Cass River". Possibly winter wigwam of those who stayed along the Saginaw River in the summer. Native Americans would typically remove wigwam covering (usually tree bark) to use at another location and leave wigwam frame.

View east of Cass River from Dixie Highway at or near their crossing point on return from Saginaw on the Saginaw Trail. Google Maps.

Painting by Beaumont of Bluejay, painted in the Pontiac area.

Return to the Flint River and friendly greeting from Trinc the bear

- Saw few animals.
- Hawk on a dead tree.

Return to Detroit and steamboat up through Lake Huron and Lake Michigan

- By August 1 they were aboard the Steamboat "Superior" headed up to Lake Huron.
- Steamboat anchored for a day at Black River, future Port Huron.
- They hunted ducks in marsh on the Canadian side of Saint Clair River.
- Continued next day up Lake Huron, eventually stopping at Mackinac Island, then on to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

A Fortnight in the Wilderness

Written aboard the steamboat "Superior." Begun the first of August 1831.

One of the things that most intensely piqued our curiosity when coming to America was to travel across the farthest limits of European civilization and, if time permitted, even to visit a few of those Indian tribes that have preferred to flee into the most untamed wilderness than to yield to what whites call the delights of the life of society. But it is more difficult than you think to find the wilderness today. From New York, as we advanced toward the northwest, the goal of our journey seemed to flee before us. We traveled through some places famous in the history of the Indians; we encountered valleys that they named; we crossed rivers that still carry the name of their tribes, but everywhere the hut of the savage has given way to the house of the civilized man. The woods had fallen; the uninhabited places took on life.

We seemed, however, to follow in the footsteps of the natives. People said to us, ten years ago they were here; there, five years ago; there, two years ago. In the place where you see the most beautiful church of the village, a person told us, I cut down the first tree of the forest. Here, another told [1304] us, the great council of the Iroquois confederation took place. "And what has become of the Indians," I said? "The Indians," our host replied, "they are beyond the Great Lakes, I do not know where. It is a race that is becoming extinct; they are not made for civilization: it kills them."

Man becomes accustomed to everything. To death on the fields of battle, to death in hospitals, to kill and to suffer. He gets used to all sights. An ancient people, the first and the legitimate master of the American continent, melts away daily like snow in the rays of the sun and disappears before your eyes from the surface of the earth. In the same areas and in its place, another race increases with a still more surprising rapidity. By this race forests fall, swamps are drained; lakes like seas, immense rivers vainly resist its triumphant march. Uninhabited places become villages, villages become cities. The daily witness to these marvels, the American sees nothing in all of that to astonish him. This unbelievable destruction, this still more surprising increase seems to him the usual course of the events of this world. He becomes accustomed to it as if to the immutable order of nature.

Thus, always in search of savages and of the wilderness, we traveled across the 360 miles that separate New York from Buffalo.

The first object that struck our eyes was a large number of Indians who had gathered that day in Buffalo to receive payment for the lands they had surrendered to the United States.

I do not believe I have ever felt a more complete disappointment than at the sight of these Indians. I was full of memories of M. de Chateaubriand and of Cooper, and I expected to see, in the natives of America, [1305] savages on whose face nature had left the trace of some of those lofty virtues that the spirit of liberty brings forth. I thought I would find in them men whose bodies had been developed by hunting and war and who would lose nothing by being seen naked. You can judge my astonishment by comparing this portrait with the one that is about to follow:

The Indians that I saw that night were small in stature; their limbs, as much as you could judge them under their clothing, were spindly and a bit wiry; their skin, instead of presenting a tint of reddish copper, as is commonly believed, was of a bronze so dark at first glance it seemed to be very close to that of mulattos. Their black and shining hair fell with a singular straightness onto their necks and shoulders. Their mouths were in general [1306] inordinately large, the facial expression ignoble and nasty. Their physiognomy proclaimed their profound depravity that only a long abuse of the benefits of civilization can give. You would have said men belonging to the lowest population of our great European cities. And yet they were still savages. With the vices that they got from us, was mingled something of the barbaric and uncivilized that made them a hundred times still more repulsive. These Indians did not carry weapons. They were covered by European clothes, but they did not use them in the same way we did. You saw that they were not used to them and still found themselves imprisoned

in their folds. With the ornaments of Europe, they joined products of a barbaric luxury, feathers, enormous earrings and shell necklaces. The movements of these men were rapid and disorderly, their voices shrill and discordant, their looks restless and savage. At first sight, you would have been tempted to see in each one of them only a beast of the forest to which education had been quite able to give the appearance of a man, but that had nonetheless remained an animal. These weak and depraved creatures belonged, however, to one of the most famous tribes of the former American world. We had before us, and it is pitiful to say so, the last remnants of the celebrated Confederation of the Iroquois whose manly wisdom was no less known than their courage and who for a long time held the balance between the two greatest European nations.

You would be wrong, however, to want to judge the Indian race on the basis of this ill-formed example, this lost offshoot of a wild tree that had grown up in the mire of our cities. That would be to repeat the error that we committed ourselves and that we had the occasion to recognize later.

That evening we left the city and a little distance from the last houses we saw an Indian lying along the road. It was a young man. He was motionless and we thought he was dead. A few stifled groans that escaped painfully from his chest let us know that he was still alive and was fighting one of those dangerous bouts of drunkenness caused by brandy. The sun had [1307]already set; the ground was becoming more and more damp. Everything announced that this unfortunate young man would give up his last breath there, unless he were helped. It was the time when the Indians left Buffalo to go back to their village; from time to time a group of them happened to pass by near us. They approached, brutally turned over the body of their compatriot in order to see who he was and then began to walk again without deigning to respond to our comments. Most of these men were drunk themselves. Finally a young Indian woman came along who at first seemed to approach with a certain interest. I thought that it was the wife or the sister of the dying man. She looked at him attentively, called his name out loud, felt his heart and, being assured that he was alive, tried to draw him out of his lethargy. But since her efforts were futile, we saw her become furious with this inanimate body that lay before her. She struck his head, twisted his face with her hands, trampled on him. While abandoning herself to these acts of ferocity, she let out inarticulate and wild cries that, at this time, still seem to reverberate in my ears. Finally we believed that we had to intervene, and we ordered her peremptorily to withdraw. She obeyed, but we heard her let out a burst of barbaric laughter as she went away.

Back in the city, we told several people about the young Indian. We spoke about the imminent danger to which he was exposed; we even offered to pay his expenses at an inn. All of that was futile. We couldn't get anyone to get involved. Some said to us: These men are used to drinking to excess and to sleeping on the ground. They do not die of such accidents. Others asserted that probably the Indian would die; but you read this half-expressed thought on their lips: What is the life of an Indian? That, deep down, was the general sentiment. Amidst this society so well-ordered, so prudish, so full of morality and virtue, you find a complete insensitivity; a sort of cold and implacable egoism when it concerns the natives of America. The inhabitants of the United States do not hunt the Indians with hounds and horn as the Spanish of Mexico did. But it is the same ruthless sentiment that animates the European race here as well as everywhere else.

How many times in the course of our travels did we not meet honest city dwellers who said to us in the evening, calmly seated in a corner of [1308] their home: Each day the number of Indians is decreasing. It isn't that we often wage war on them, but the brandy that we sell to them at a low cost removes more of them every year than we could do with our arms. This world belongs to us, they added; God, by denying its first inhabitants the ability to become more civilized, destined them in advance to an inevitable destruction. The true owners of the continent are those who know how to make the most of its riches.

Satisfied with his reasoning the American goes to church where he hears a minister of the Gospel repeat to him that men are brothers and that the eternal being, who made them all on the same model, gave to all of them the duty to help one another.

* * * * *

On July 19 at ten o'clock in the morning we boarded the steamboat *Ohio,* taking us toward Detroit. A very strong breeze blew from the northwest and gave the waters of Lake Erie all the appearance of the agitation of ocean waves. To the right spread a limitless horizon, to the left we kept close to the southern coasts of the lake which we often approached close enough to hear voices. These coasts were perfectly flat and differed from those of all the lakes that I had had the occasion to visit in Europe. Nor did they resemble the shores of the sea. Immense forests shaded them and formed a sort of thick and rarely broken belt around the lake. From time to time, however, the country suddenly changes appearance. Coming around a woods, you notice the elegant spire of a church steeple, houses

sparkling with whiteness and cleanliness, shops. Two steps further, the primitive and seemingly impenetrable forest regains its sway and again its foliage is reflected in the waters of the lake.
Those who have traveled throughout the United States will find in this picture a striking emblem of American society. Everything there is abrupt [1309] and unexpected; everywhere extreme civilization and nature abandoned to itself are found together and, in a way, face to face. It is not what you imagine in France. As for me, in my traveler's illusions—and what class of men does not have its own—I imagined something entirely different. I had noticed that in Europe, the more or less isolated state in which a province or a city was found, its wealth or its poverty, its small or large size exercised an immense influence on the ideas, the mores, the whole civilization of its inhabitants and often put the difference of several centuries between the various parts of the same territory.
I thought it was so with more reason in the New World, and that a country, populated in an incomplete and partial manner as America, had to present all the conditions of existence and offer the image of society across all the ages. So America, according to me, was the only country in which you could follow step by step all the transformations that the social state imposed on man and in which it was possible to see those transformations like a vast chain that descended link by link from the opulent patrician of the cities to the savage of the wilderness. There, in a word, I expected to find the entire history of humanity enclosed within a few degrees of longitude.
Nothing is true in this picture. Of all the countries in the world, America is the least appropriate for providing the spectacle that I was coming to find there. In America, still more than in Europe, there is only a single society. It can be rich or poor, humble or brilliant, commercial or agricultural, but everywhere it is composed of the same elements. The leveling effect of an equal civilization has passed over it. The man that you have left in the streets of New York, you will find again in the middle of the nearly impenetrable wilderness; the same clothing, same spirit, same language, same habits, same pleasures. Nothing rustic, nothing naive, nothing that feels like the wilderness, nothing that even resembles our villages. The reason for this singular state of things is easy to understand. The portions of the territories populated earliest and most completely have achieved a high level of civilization, instruction has been lavished there profusely, the spirit of equality [{the republican spirit}] has given a singularly uniform color to the internal habits of life. Now, note it well, these are precisely the same men who go [1310] each year to populate the wilderness. In Europe, each man lives and dies on the soil where he was born. In America, nowhere do you find representatives of a race that has multiplied in the wilderness after living there for a long time, unknown to the world and left to its own efforts. Those who inhabit these isolated places arrived there yesterday. They came with the mores, the ideas, the needs of civilization. They yield to savage life only what the imperious nature of things requires of them. From that the most bizarre contrasts result. You pass without transition from the wilderness to the street of a city, from the most wild scenes to the most pleasant pictures of civilized life. If night surprises you, do not force yourself to take shelter at the foot of a tree; you have a great chance of arriving in a village where you will find everything, even including French fashions and caricatures of boulevards. The merchant of Buffalo and of Detroit is as well supplied as that of New York; the mills of Lyons work for the one as for the other. You leave the main roads, you plunge along paths hardly cleared. You finally see a cleared field, a cabin made of logs half-hewn where daylight enters only by a narrow window; you finally believe you have reached the dwelling of the American peasant. Error. You penetrate the cabin that seems to be the home of all miseries, but the owner of this place wears the same clothes as you; he speaks the language of the cities. On the crude table are books and newspapers; the owner himself hastens to take you inside in order to know exactly what is happening in old Europe and to ask you for an accounting about what has struck you the most in his country. He will draw on paper a military campaign plan for the Belgians, and will teach you gravely what remains to be done for the prosperity of France. [≠He hastens to draw you away from the dramas of his country in order to talk to you about old Europe. He will say to you that the Poles have won [lost? (ed.)] at Ostrolenka and will inform you that a majority of one hundred votes has just destroyed the heredity peerage in the hereditary monarchy of France.≠] You would think you are seeing a rich landowner who has come to live temporarily for a few nights at a hunting camp. And in fact, the log cabin is for the American only a momentary shelter, a temporary concession made to the necessity of circumstances. When the fields that surround it are entirely in production and when the new owner has the leisure to occupy himself with [1311]the pleasant things of life, a house more spacious and more appropriate to his needs will replace the *log house* and will serve as a shelter for the numerous children who one day will also go off to create a dwelling in the wilderness.
But, to come back to our journey, we navigated with difficulty all day long in sight of the coasts of Pennsylvania and later those of Ohio. We stopped for a moment at Presqu'Ile, today Erie. That is

where the canal from Pittsburgh will end. By means of this work, whose complete execution is, they say, easy and now certain, the Mississippi will communicate with the River of the North and the riches of Europe will circulate freely across the five hundred leagues of land that separate the Gulf of Mexico from the Atlantic Ocean.

In the evening, the weather having become favorable, we headed rapidly toward Detroit by crossing the middle of the lake. The following morning, we were in sight of the small island called *Middle Sister* near where, in 1814, Commodore Perry won a famous naval victory over the English.

A little later, the even coasts of Canada seemed to approach rapidly and we saw the Detroit River opening before us and, appearing in the distance, the walls of Fort Malden. This place, founded by the French, still bears numerous traces of its origin. The houses have the form and the placement of those of our peasants. In the center of the hamlet arises the Catholic church tower surmounted by a cock. You would say a village around Caen or Evreux. While we considered, not without emotion, this image of France, our attention was diverted by the sight of a singular spectacle. To our right, on the river bank, a Scottish soldier mounted guard in full uniform. He wore the uniform that the fields of Waterloo have made so famous. The feathered cap, the jacket, nothing was missing; the sun made his uniform and his weapons glisten. To our left, and as if to provide a parallel for us, two entirely naked Indians, their bodies gaudy with colors, their noses pierced by rings, arrived at the same moment on the opposite bank. They climbed into a small bark canoe in which a blanket formed the sail. Abandoning this fragile, small boat to the work of the wind and current, they darted like an arrow toward our vessel, which they went around in an instant. Then they went calmly to fish near the English soldier who, [1312] still glistening and immobile, seemed placed there like the representative of the brilliant and armed civilization of Europe.

We arrived at Detroit at three o'clock. Detroit is a small city of two or three thousand souls that the Jesuits founded in the middle of the woods in 1710 and that still contains a large number of French families.

We had crossed the entire State of New York and done one hundred leagues on Lake Erie; this time we touched upon the limits of civilization, but we did not know at all where we needed to head. To find out was not something as easy as you may believe. To travel through nearly impenetrable forests, to cross deep rivers, to face pestilential swamps, to sleep exposed to the dampness of the woods, these are the efforts that the American imagines without difficulty if it is a matter of earning a dollar; for that is the point. But that someone would do similar things out of curiosity, this does not occur to his mind. Add that living in the wilderness, he prizes only the work of man. He will gladly send you to visit a road, a bridge, a beautiful village. But that you attach a value to great trees and to a beautiful solitude, that is absolutely beyond him.

So nothing is more difficult than to find someone able to understand you. You want to see the forest, our hosts said smilingly to us; go straight ahead of you, you will find what you want. In the vicinity there are as a matter of fact new roads and well-cleared paths. As for the Indians, you will see too many of them in our public squares and in our streets; there is no need to go farther for that. Those Indians at least are beginning to become civilized and have a less savage appearance. We didn't take long to realize that it was impossible to obtain the truth from them by frontal assault and that we had to *maneuver*.

So we went to the official charged by the United States with the sale of the still unoccupied lands covering the district of Michigan; we presented ourselves to him as men who, without having a well-fixed intention of settling in the country, could nonetheless have a long-term interest in knowing the price of the lands and their situation. Major Biddle, which was the [1313] name of the official, understood marvelously this time what we wanted to do and immediately launched into a host of details that we listened to eagerly. This part, he says to us, showing us on the map the St. Joseph river, which after long twistings and turnings, discharges into Lake Michigan, seems to be the most suitable for meeting your plans; the land is good there; some beautiful villages have already been established, and the road that leads there is so well maintained that every day public coaches travel it. Good! we said to ourselves; we now know where we should not go unless we want to visit the wilderness by postal coach. We thanked Mr. Biddle for his advice and asked him, with an air of indifference and a kind of scorn, what was the portion of the district where until now the current of emigration made itself least felt. "Over here," he says to us, without giving more value to his words than we to our question, "toward the northwest. Toward Pontiac and in the area surrounding this village some quite beautiful settlements have been recently founded. But you must not think about settling farther away; the country is covered by an almost impenetrable forest that extends endlessly toward the northwest, where you find only wild beasts and Indians. The United States plans to open a road there shortly; but

as yet it has only been started and stops at Pontiac. I repeat to you, it is a part that you must not think about." We again thanked Mr. Biddle for his good counsel and we left determined to do exactly the opposite. We were beside [1314] ourselves with joy at finally knowing a place that had not yet been reached by the torrent of European civilization.

The next day, July 23, we hastened to rent two horses. Since we expected to keep them for ten days, we wanted to put a certain price in the hands of the owner; but he refused to accept it, saying that we would pay when we returned. He was not worried. Michigan is surrounded on all sides by lakes and wilderness; he let us loose in a kind of riding school, whose door he held. So after purchasing a compass as well as provisions, we got underway, rifle over the shoulder, with as much lack of concern about the future and as lightheartedly as two schoolboys who would be leaving school to go to spend their vacation at their father's house.

If in fact we had only wanted to see the forest, our hosts of Detroit would have been right to tell us that it was not necessary to go very far, for one mile from the city the road entered into the forest never to emerge again. [1315] The terrain on which the road is found is perfectly flat and often swampy. From time to time new clearings are found on the way. Since these settlements perfectly resemble each other, whether they are found deep in Michigan or at the door of New York, I am going to try to describe them here once and for all.

The small bells that the pioneer carefully hangs around the necks of his animals in order to find them in the thick woods announce from afar the approach to a clearing. Soon you hear the sound of the ax that fells the trees of the forest and, as you approach, signs of destruction announce still more clearly the presence of man. Cut branches cover the road, trunks half-charred by fire or mutilated by iron, still stand upright along your passage. You continue your march and you come to a woods in which all the trees seem to have been stricken by sudden death. In the middle of summer their dry branches present nothing more than the image of winter. Examining them more closely, you notice that in their bark a deep circle has been traced that, stopping the circulation of sap, did not take long to make them die. This in fact is how the planter usually begins. Not able the first year to cut all the trees that cover his new property, he sows corn under their branches and, by killing them, he prevents them from shading his crop. After this field, an incomplete beginning, a first step of civilization in the wilderness, you suddenly see the cabin of the landowner. It is generally placed in the center of a ground more carefully cultivated than the rest, but where man still sustains an unequal battle against nature. There the trees have been cut, but not uprooted; their trunks still cover and clutter the ground that they formerly shaded. Around these dried-up remains, wheat, oak shoots, plants of all types, weeds of all kinds grow jumbled together and increase together on an intractable and still half-wild ground. At the center of this vigorous and varied vegetation arises the house of the planter, or as it is called in this country, the *log house*. Like the field around it, this rustic dwelling announces a new and [1316] hurried work. Its length rarely exceeds 30 feet. It is 20 feet wide, 15 feet high. Its walls as well as the roof are formed from tree trunks not squared off, between which moss and earth have been placed to prevent the cold and the rain from penetrating the interior of the house. As the traveler approaches, the scene becomes more animated. Warned by the sound of his footsteps, the children who were rolling around in the surrounding debris, get up precipitously and flee toward the parental refuge, as though frightened at the sight of a man, while two large half-wild dogs, ears upright and muzzles elongated, emerge from the cabin and come growling to cover the retreat of their young masters.

Then the pioneer himself appears at the door of his dwelling; he casts a searching glance at the new arrival, signals to his dogs to come back into the house and hastens to serve as their example himself without exhibiting either curiosity or concern.

At the entry of the *log house,* the European cannot prevent himself from casting an astonished eye over the spectacle that it presents.

There is generally in this cabin only a single window at which a muslin curtain sometimes hangs; for in these places, where it is not rare to see necessities missing, superfluities are frequently found. On the hearth of beaten earth crackles a resinous fire that, better than the day, lights up the interior of the building. Above this rustic hearth, you see trophies of war or hunting; a long rifle with a grooved barrel, a deerskin, eagle feathers. To the right of the chimney a map of the United States is often spread, which the wind, coming through the chinks in the wall, flaps and agitates constantly. Near it, on a single shelf of rough hewn planks are placed a few random volumes: a Bible whose cover and edges are already worn by the piety of two generations, a book of prayers, and sometimes a canto of Milton or a Shakespeare tragedy [{a history of America, a few pious stories and some newspapers}]. Along the walls are placed a few crude seats, fruit of the owner's industry, trunks instead of armoires,

agricultural implements and some samples of the harvest. At the center of the room is a wobbly table whose legs, still covered with foliage, seem to have grown by themselves out of the earth on the spot occupied by the table. That is where the entire family gathers each day to take its meals. There you also see a teapot [1317] of English porcelain, spoons usually of wood, a few chipped cups and some newspapers.

The appearance of the master of this dwelling is no less remarkable than the place that serves as his shelter.

Angular muscles, slender limbs make the inhabitant of New England recognizable at first glance. This man was not born in the wilderness where he lives. His constitution alone declares it. His first years were spent within an intellectual and reasoning society. It is his will that has thrown him into the wilderness undertakings for which he seems so little fit. But if his physical strength seems not up to his enterprise, on his features furrowed by the cares of life, there reigns an air of practical intelligence, of cold and persevering energy that is striking at first sight. His gait is slow and formal, his words measured and his appearance austere. Habit and, even more, pride have given his face this stoic rigidity that his actions belie. The pioneer scorns, it is true, what often agitates the heart of men most violently; his goods and his life will never follow the chance of a throw of the dice or the fortunes of a woman; but, to gain comfort, he has faced exile, solitude and the innumerable miseries of uncivilized life; he has slept on the bare ground; he has been exposed to forest fever and to the Indian's tomahawk. He made this effort one day, he has duplicated it for years; he will do it perhaps for another twenty years, without discouragement and without complaint. [{In the pursuit of what he regards as the goal of his entire life, every competitor, every adversary will become an enemy to whom an implacable hatred will be attached as durable as the sentiment that gave birth to it. Is that a man without passions [v: cold and unfeeling]?}] Is a man who is capable of such sacrifices a cold and unfeeling being? Shouldn't we, on the contrary, recognize in him one of those mental passions that are so ardent, so tenacious, so implacable? Concentrated on this sole goal of making a fortune, the emigrant has finished by creating an entirely individual existence; the sentiments of family have themselves merged into a vast egoism, and it is doubtful that in his wife and his children he sees anything other than a detached portion of himself. Deprived of habitual relationships with his fellows, he has learned to make solitude a pleasure. When you present yourself at the threshold of his isolated dwelling, the pioneer advances to meet you; he offers his hand as is the custom, but his physiognomy [1318] expresses neither welcome nor joy. He speaks only to interrogate you; it is a need of the head and not of the heart that he is satisfying, and scarcely has he drawn from you the news that he desired to learn than he falls back into silence. You would think you were seeing a man who withdrew in the evening into his house fatigued by troublesome individuals and the chatter of the world. Interrogate him in turn; he will intelligently give you the information you lack; he will even provide for your needs; he will look to your safety as long as you are under his roof. But so much restraint and pride reign in all his conduct, you see in it such a profound indifference about even the result of his efforts, that you feel your gratitude cool. The pioneer is hospitable in his way, but his hospitality in no way touches you because he seems, while exercising it, to be submitting to a painful necessity of the wilderness. He sees in hospitality a duty that his position imposes on him, not a pleasure. This unknown man is the representative of a restless, reasoning and adventurous race that does coldly what only the ardor of the passions explains, who traffics in everything without exception, even morality and religion.

A nation of conquerors who submit to leading savage life without ever letting themselves be carried away by its sweet pleasures, who love civilization and enlightenment only when they are useful for well-being, and who shut themselves up in the wilderness of America with an ax and some newspapers; a people who, like all great peoples, has only one thought, and who advances toward the acquisition of wealth, the only goal of its efforts, with a perseverance and a scorn for life that you could call heroic, if the word was suitable for something other than the efforts of virtue. This wandering people, not stopped by rivers and lakes, before whom forests fall and prairies are covered with shade, will, after touching the Pacific Ocean, retrace its steps and destroy the societies that it will have formed behind it.

While speaking about the pioneer, you cannot forget the companion of his miseries and of his dangers. See at the other end of the room, this young woman who, while overseeing preparations for the meal, rocks her youngest son on her knees. Like the emigrant, this woman is in the prime of life, like him she can recall the comfort of her earliest years. Her dress still announces even now a barely extinguished taste for finery. But time has weighed [1319] heavily on her. On her features faded before their time, on her weakened limbs, it is easy to see that existence has been a heavy burden for her. In fact this

frail creature has already been exposed to incredible miseries. Hardly entered into life, she had to tear herself away from the tenderness of her mother and these sweet fraternal bonds that the young woman never abandons without shedding tears, even when she leaves them to go to share the opulent house of a new husband. The wife of the pioneer, removed in a moment and without hope of return from this innocent cradle of youth, has exchanged the charms of society and the joys of the domestic home for the solitude of the forests. Her nuptial bed was placed on the bare earth of the wilderness. To devote herself to her austere duties, to submit to privations that were unknown to her, to embrace an existence for which she was not made, such was the use of the best years of her life, such have been for her the sweet pleasures of the conjugal union. Deprivation, sufferings and boredom have altered her fragile structure, but not weakened her courage. Amid the profound sadness painted on her delicate features, you easily notice a religious resignation, a profound peace, and I do not know what natural and tranquil steadfastness that meets all the miseries of life without fearing or defying them.

Around this woman crowd half-dressed children, shining with health, unconcerned about tomorrow, true sons of the wilderness. Their mother from time to time gives them a look full of melancholy and joy; to see their strength and her weakness, you would say that she has exhausted herself by giving life to them, and that she does not regret what they have cost her.

The house inhabited by the emigrants has no interior walls or attic. Into the single room that it contains, the entire family comes at night to find shelter. This dwelling by itself alone forms like a small world. It is the ark of civilization lost amid an ocean of leaves, a sort of oasis in the desert. One hundred steps further the endless forest spreads its shadow and the wilderness begins again.

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We arrived at Pontiac only after the sun went down and it was evening. Twenty very clean and exceedingly pretty buildings, forming as many well [1320] supplied stores, a limpid stream, a clearing of a quarter league square, and the endless forest around it: there is the faithful picture of the village of Pontiac that in twenty years will perhaps be a city. The sight of this place reminded me of what Mr. Gallatin had said to me a month before in New York; there are no villages in America, at least in the sense that we give to the word. Here the houses of the farmers are all spread out among the fields. People do not gather in one place except to establish a kind of market for the use of the surrounding population. You see in these so-called villages only men of law, printers or merchants.

We were directed to the most beautiful inn in Pontiac (for there are two) and we were brought as is customary into what is called the *bar room*. It is a room where you are given drinks and where the simplest worker as well as the richest merchant of the place come to smoke, to drink, and to talk politics together on the most perfect outwardly equal footing. The master of the place or the landlord was, I will not say a large peasant, there are no peasants in America, but at least a very large man who wore on his face that expression of candor and simplicity that distinguishes Norman horse traders. He was a man who, for fear of intimidating you, never looked you in the face while speaking, but waited to look at you when he felt comfortable, while you were occupied conversing elsewhere. Moreover, a profound politician and, following American habits, an unrelenting questioner. This respected citizen, as well as the rest of the assembly, considered us at first with astonishment. Our travel clothes and our guns hardly announced business entrepreneurs, and to travel simply to see was something absolutely unaccustomed. In order to cut explanations short, we declared [1321] right at the beginning that we came to buy land. Hardly were the words said, than we noticed that by trying to avoid one evil we had thrown ourselves into another very much more formidable one.

They ceased treating us, it is true, like extraordinary beings, but each one wanted to do business with us; to get rid of them and their farms, we said to our host that before concluding anything, we would like to obtain from him useful information about the price of land and about how to cultivate it. He immediately brought us into another room, with a fitting slowness spread a map of Michigan on the oak table that was in the middle of the room and, placing the candle between the three of us, waited in an impassive silence for what we had to say to him. The reader, without having like us the intention of settling in one of the uninhabited places of America, may nonetheless be curious to know how so many thousands of Europeans and Americans who come each year to find shelter there set about to do so. So I am going to transcribe here the information provided by our host from Pontiac. Often since, we have indeed been able to verify the perfect exactness of his information.

“Here it is not like in France,” our host said to us after having calmly heard all our questions and snuffed out the candle; “in your country labor is cheap and land is expensive; here buying land costs nothing and the labor of men is beyond price. I am saying this in order to show you that, to settle in America as in Europe, capital is necessary, although it is used differently. [1322] For my part, I would not advise anyone, no matter who it may be, to come to seek a fortune in our wilderness unless having

at his disposition a sum of 150 to 200 dollars (800 to 1,000 francs). An acre in Michigan never costs more than 10 shillings (about 6 Fr., 50 c.) when the land is still uncultivated. So a worker can earn in one day what it takes to buy an acre. But the purchase made, the difficulty begins. Here is how you generally set about to overcome it. The pioneer goes to the place that he has just bought with a few animals, salted pork, two barrels of wheat and some tea. If he finds a cabin near, he goes there and receives temporary hospitality. In the opposite case he puts up a tent in the very middle of the woods that is to become his field. His first care is to cut down the nearest trees, with which he hastily builds the crude house whose structure you have already been able to examine. Among us, the maintenance of animals scarcely costs anything. The emigrant releases them into the forest after attaching a small iron bell to them. It is very rare for these animals, left to themselves in this way, to leave the area around their home. The greatest expense is that of clearing the land. If the pioneer arrives in the wilderness with a family able to aid him in his first efforts, his task is easy enough. But it is rarely so. In general the emigrant is young and, if he already has children, they are young. Then he must provide alone for all the first needs of his family or hire the services of his neighbors. It costs him from 4 to 5 dollars (from 20 to 25 francs) to have an acre cleared. Once the land is prepared, the new owner puts one acre in potatoes, the rest in wheat and corn. Corn is the providence of these wilderness areas; it grows in the water of our swamps and sprouts beneath the foliage of the forest better than under the rays of the sun. It is corn that saves the family of the emigrant from an inevitable destruction, when poverty, illness or negligence have prevented him from sufficiently clearing the land during the first year. There is nothing more difficult to get through [1323] than the first years that follow the clearing of the land. Later comes comfort, and then wealth."

This is how our host spoke; as for us, we listened to these simple details with almost as much interest as if we had wanted to profit from them ourselves; and when he became silent, we said to him:

"The land of all these uninhabited forests is generally swampy and unhealthy; doesn't the emigrant who exposes himself to the miseries of the wilderness at least fear for his life?" "All clearing of the land is a perilous undertaking," replied the American, "and it is almost without example that the pioneer or his family escapes forest fever during the first year. Often when you travel in the autumn, you find all the inhabitants of the cabin suffering from the fever, from the emigrant to his youngest son." "And what becomes of these unfortunates when Providence strikes them like that?" "They resign themselves while waiting for a better future." "But do they hope for some help from their fellows?" "Almost none." "Can they at least obtain help from medicine?" "The closest doctor often lives 60 miles from their house. They do as the Indians; they die or are cured depending on God's pleasure." We began again: "Does the voice of religion sometimes come to them?" "Very rarely; we have not yet been able to *provide for* anything in our woods to assure the public observation of a religion. Nearly every summer, it is true, a few Methodist preachers come to travel through the new settlements. Word of their arrival spreads with an incredible rapidity from cabin to cabin; it is the great news of the day. At the time appointed, the emigrant, his wife and his children, head along the paths scarcely cleared through the forest toward the indicated meeting place. People come there from 50 miles around. The faithful do not gather in a church but in the open, under the leaves of the forest. A pulpit made from rough-hewn trunks, large trees turned over to serve as pews, these are the adornments of this rustic church. The pioneers and their families camp in the woods that surround it; there for three days and three nights the crowd practices religious exercises rarely interrupted. You have to see how ardently these men give themselves to prayer, with what reverence they listen to the solemn voice of the preacher. It is in the wilderness that they show themselves famished for religion." "A final question. It is generally believed among us that the [1324] wilderness of America is populated with the help of European emigration. So how is it that since we have been traveling through your forests, we haven't happened to meet a single European?" A smile of superiority and satisfied pride was written on the features of our host upon hearing this question:

It is only Americans, he answered emphatically, who can have the courage to submit to such miseries and who know how to buy comfort at such a price. The European emigrant stops in the large cities that are on the coast or in the districts surrounding them. There, he becomes artisan, farm laborer, valet. He leads a more pleasant life than in Europe and appears satisfied to leave the same inheritance to his children. The American on the contrary takes possession of the land and, with it, he seeks to create a great future for himself.

After uttering these final words, our host stopped. He let an immense column of smoke escape from his mouth and seemed ready to listen to what we had to say to inform him about our plans.

We thanked him first for his valuable advice and for his wise counsel from which we assured him we would profit some day, and we added: "Before settling in your district, my dear host, we have the

intention of going to Saginaw and we want to consult you on this point." At the word Saginaw a singular transformation took place in the physiognomy of the American; it seemed that we had dragged him violently out of real life to push him into the domains of the imagination; his eyes dilated, his mouth gaped and a look of the most profound astonishment was written on all his features: "You want to go to Saginaw," he cried, "to Saginaw Bay! Two reasonable men, two cultivated foreigners want to go to Saginaw Bay? It is scarcely believable." "And so why not?" we replied. "But do you know clearly," our host began again, "what you are proposing? Do you know that Saginaw is the last inhabited point until the Pacific Ocean? That from here to Saginaw you find nothing more than a wilderness and uncleared empty spaces? Have you considered that the woods are full of Indians and of mosquitoes? That you will have to bed down at least one night in the dampness of the forest shade? Have you thought about the fever? Will you know how to get out of difficulty in the wilderness and not get lost in the [1325]labyrinth of our forests?" After this tirade he paused in order to judge better the impression he had made. We resumed: "All that is perhaps true. But we will leave tomorrow morning for Saginaw Bay." Our host reflected a moment, nodded his head, and said in a slow and positive way: "Only a great interest could lead two foreigners to such an undertaking: you have almost certainly figured, very wrongly, that it was advantageous to settle in the places most remote from all competition?" We did not respond. He resumed: "Perhaps you have been charged as well by the fur trading company of Canada with establishing a relationship with the Indian tribes of the frontier?" Same silence. Our host had run out of conjectures and he was quiet, but he continued to reflect deeply about the strangeness of our plan.

"Have you never been to Saginaw?" we said. "Me," he answered, "I have been there five or six times, to my sorrow, but I had a reason to do so and no reason can be found for you." "But don't lose sight, my worthy host, of the fact that we are not asking you if we must go to Saginaw, but only what is needed to manage to do so easily." Thus led back to the question, our American regained all his composure and all the clarity of his ideas; he explained to us in a few words and with an admirable practical good sense the way in which we had to proceed in order to cross the wilderness, entered into the smallest details, and foresaw the most unlikely circumstances. At the end of his instructions he paused again in order to see if we would not finally reveal the secret of our journey, and noticing that on both sides we had nothing more to say, he took the candle, led us to a room and, very democratically shaking our hands, went away to finish the evening in the common room.

We got up with the day and prepared to leave. Our host was soon afoot himself. Night had not revealed to him what made us stick to behavior that was so extraordinary in his eyes. Since we appeared absolutely decided to act contrary to his counsel, however, he dared not return to the charge, but constantly circled around us. From time to time he repeated half-aloud: *"I can imagine with difficulty* what can lead two foreigners to go to Saginaw." He repeated this sentence several times, until finally I said to him putting my foot in the stirrup: "There are many reasons that lead us to do so, my dear host." He stopped short upon hearing these words, and looking me [1326] in the face for the first time, he seemed to prepare himself to hear the revelation of a great mystery. But, calmly mounting my horse, I gave him a sign of friendship as a concluding gesture and moved away at a fast trot. When I was fifty steps away, I turned my head; I saw him still planted like a haystack before his door. A little later he went back inside shaking his head. I imagine that he still said: "I have difficulty understanding what two foreigners are going to do in Saginaw."

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We had been advised to address ourselves to a Mr. Williams who, having traded for a long time with the Chippewa Indians and having a son settled at Saginaw, could provide us with useful information. After going several miles in the woods and afraid that we had already missed the house of our man, we encountered an old man busy working in a small garden. We approached him. It was Mr. Williams himself. He received us with great kindness and gave us a letter for his son. We asked him if we had anything to fear from the Indian bands whose territory we were going to cross. Mr. Williams rejected this idea with a kind of indignation: "No! No!," he said, "you can go without fear. For my part, I would sleep more tranquilly among Indians than among whites." I note this as the first favorable impression that I had received about the Indians since my arrival in America. In very inhabited regions they are only spoken about with a mixture of fear and scorn, and I believe that there in fact they deserve these two feelings. You could see above what I thought about them myself when I met the first of them at Buffalo. As you advance in this journal and as you follow me amid the European population of the frontier and amid the Indian tribes themselves, you will conceive a more honorable and, at the very same time, more accurate idea of the first inhabitants of America.

After leaving Mr. Williams we continued our route through the woods. [1327] From time to time a small lake (this district is full of them) appeared like a sheet of silver beneath the forest foliage. It is difficult to imagine the charm that surrounds these lovely places where man has not settled and where a profound peace and an uninterrupted silence still reign. I have traveled in the Alps through dreadful, isolated areas where nature rejects the labor of man, but displays even in its very horrors a grandeur that transports and grips the soul. Here the solitude is not less profound, but it does not produce the same impressions. The only sentiments that you feel while traveling through these flowered wilderness areas where, as in Milton's *Paradise,*everything is prepared to receive man, are a tranquil admiration, a mild melancholy, a vague disgust with civilized life; a sort of wild instinct that makes you think with pain that soon this delicious solitude will have changed face. Already in fact the white race advances across the surrounding woods and, in a few years, the European will have cut the trees that are reflected in the clear waters of the lake and forced the animals that populate its shores to withdraw toward new wilderness areas.

Always on the move, we came to a country with a new appearance. The land there was not level, but cut by hills and valleys. Several of these hills presented the most wild appearance. It was in one of these picturesque passages that, turning ourselves around suddenly to contemplate the imposing spectacle that we were leaving behind us, we noticed to our great surprise near the hindquarters of our horses an Indian who seemed to follow us step by step. He was a man about thirty years old, large and admirably proportioned as nearly all of them are. His black and shining hair fell to his shoulders except for two braids that were tied up at the top of his head. His face was daubed with black and red. He was covered with a type of very short blue blouse. He wore red *mittas;* these are a type of pants that go only to the top of the thigh, and his feet were covered with moccasins. At his side hung a knife. In his right hand he held a long carbine and in his left two birds that he had just killed. The first sight of this Indian made a not very pleasant impression on us. The place was poorly chosen for resisting an attack. To our right a pine forest rose to an immense height, to our left extended a deep ravine at the bottom of which among [1328] the rocks flowed a small stream hidden from our sight by the obscurity of the foliage and toward which we descended blindly! Putting our hands on our rifles, turning and putting ourselves in the path opposite the Indian took only a moment. He stopped as well. We remained in silence for a half-minute. His face presented all the characteristic features that distinguish the Indian race from all others. In his perfectly black eyes gleamed the savage fire that still animates the look of the half-breed and is lost only with the second or third generation of white blood. His nose was hooked in the middle, slightly flat at the end, his cheekbones very prominent, and his strikingly wide mouth showed two rows of glistening white teeth that proved well enough that the savage, cleaner than his neighbor the American, did not spend his day chewing tobacco leaves. I said that at the moment when we had turned ourselves around putting our hands on our weapons, the Indian stopped. He underwent the rapid examination that we made of his person with an absolute impassivity, a steady and unchanging look. Since he saw that we had on our side no hostile sentiment, he began to smile; probably he saw that we were alarmed. It was the first time that I was able to observe to what extent the expression of gaiety completely changes the physiognomy of these savage men. I have since had the occasion a hundred times to make the same remark. A serious Indian and a smiling Indian are two entirely different men. There reigns in the immobility of the first a savage majesty that imposes an involuntary sentiment of terror. If this same man begins to smile, his entire face takes on an expression of innocence and of kindness that gives him a real charm.

When we saw our man brighten, we addressed some words to him in English. He let us speak as much as we wanted, then gestured that he did not understand. We offered him a bit of brandy, which he accepted without hesitation and without thanks. Speaking always by signs, we asked him for the birds that he carried and he gave them to us in return for a small coin. Having thus made his acquaintance, we saluted him and left at a fast trot. At the end of a quarter hour of a rapid march, turning around again, I was surprised to see the Indian still behind the hindquarters of my horse. He ran with the agility of a wild animal, without saying a single word or appearing to lengthen his stride. We stopped; he stopped. We started again; [1329] he started again. We raced at full speed. Our horses, raised in the wilderness, easily overcame all obstacles. The Indian doubled his pace; I saw him sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left of my horse, leaping over bushes and coming back down to earth noiselessly. You would have said one of those wolves of Northern Europe that follow riders with the hope that they will fall from their horses and can be more easily devoured. The sight of this constant figure that seemed to hover at our sides, sometimes becoming lost in the obscurity of the forest, sometimes reappearing clearly, ended up becoming disturbing to us. Not able to imagine what led this man to follow us at such a hurried pace—and perhaps he had been doing so for a very long time when

we discovered him for the first time—the idea occurred to us that he was leading us into an ambush. We were occupied with these thoughts when we noticed in the woods before us the end of another carbine. Soon we were next to the man who carried it. We took him at first for an Indian; he was covered by a sort of frock coat, close-fitted around the small of his back, delineating a narrow and neat waist; his neck was naked and his feet covered by moccasins. When we came near him and he raised his head, we immediately recognized a European and we stopped. He came up to us, shook our hands cordially and entered into conversation with us: "Do you live in the wilderness?" "Yes, here is my house"; amid the leaves he showed us a hut much more miserable than the usual *log houses*. "Alone?" "Alone." "And so what do you do here?" "I wander through these woods and, to the right and left, I kill the game that I meet along the way, but it is not going well now." "And this kind of life pleases you?" "More than any other." "But aren't you afraid of the Indians?" "Afraid of the Indians! I prefer to live amid them than in the society of whites. No! No! I am not afraid of the Indians. They are worth more than we are, at least as long as we have not brutalized them with our liquors, the poor creatures!" We then showed our new acquaintance the man who followed us so obstinately and who had then stopped a few steps away and remained as unmoving as a statue. "He is a Chippewa," he said, "or as the French call them [1330] a *Sauteur*. I wager that he is returning from Canada where he received the annual presents from the English. His family must not be far from here." Having said this, the American gestured to the Indian to approach and began to speak to him in his language with an extreme facility. It was a remarkable thing to see the pleasure that these two men, so different by birth and mores, found in exchanging their ideas. The conversation turned evidently on the respective merit of their weapons. The white, after very attentively examining the rifle of the savage: "That is a beautiful carbine," he said, "the English almost certainly gave it to him to use against us and he won't fail to do so at the first war. That is how the Indians draw upon their heads all the misfortunes that burden them. But they won't know it for long, the poor fellows." "Do the Indians use these long and heavy rifles with skill?" "There are no marksmen like the Indians," our new friend resumed energetically with a tone of the greatest admiration. "Examine the small birds he sold to you, Sir, they are pierced by a single bullet, and I am very sure that he fired only two shots to take them. Oh!" he added, "there is nothing happier than an Indian in the regions where we have not yet made the game flee. But the large animals sense us at more than three hundred miles, and by withdrawing they create before us like a desert where the poor Indians can no longer live if they do not cultivate the earth."

As we retook our path: "When you pass by again," our new friend cried to us, "knock on my door. It is a pleasure to meet white faces in these places."

I have related this conversation, which in itself contains nothing remarkable, in order to show a kind of man that we met very frequently at the limits of inhabited lands. They are Europeans who, despite the habits of their youth, have ended up finding in the liberty of the wilderness an inexpressible charm. Attached to the uninhabited places of America by their taste and their passions, to Europe by their religion, their principles, and their ideas, they mix the love of savage life with the pride of civilization and prefer the Indians to their compatriots without, however, recognizing them as their equals.

So we resumed our journey and, advancing always with the same rapidity, at the end of a half-hour we reached the house of a pioneer. Before the [1331] door of this cabin an Indian family has set up a temporary dwelling. An old woman, two young girls, several children crouched around a fire to whose heat the remains of a whole deer were exposed. A few steps from there on the grass, a completely nude Indian warmed himself in the rays of the sun while a small child rolled around near him in the dust. There our silent companion stopped; he left us without taking our leave and sat down gravely amid his compatriots. What had been able to lead this man to follow the path of our horses in this way for two leagues? That is what we were never able to find out. After eating in this place, we remounted our horses and continued our march through a not very thick cluster of high trees. The thicket had been burned previously as could be seen by the charred remnants of a few trees that were lying on the grass. The ground is covered today by ferns that are spread as far as you can see beneath the forest covering.

20. Bird painted at Pontiac, original watercolor by Gustave de Beaumont (*with kind permission from the Beinecke Library, Yale University*).

21. Saginaw Forest, original pencil sketch by Gustave de Beaumont (*with kind permission from the Beinecke Library, Yale University*).

Forêt de Saginaw. Esquisse au crayon par Gustave de Beaumont (*avec l'aimable autorisation de la Beinecke Library, Yale University*) [Saginaw Forest. Sketch in pencil by Gustave de Beaumont (*with kind permission from the Beinecke Library, Yale University*)].

A few leagues further my horse lost his shoe, which caused us intense concern. Near there fortunately, we met a planter who managed to reshoe it. Without this meeting I doubt that we would have been able to go further, for we were then approaching the extreme limit of cleared lands. This same man who had enabled us to continue our journey, urged us to hurry up; day was beginning to fade and two long leagues still separated us from *Flint River* where we wanted to go to sleep.
Soon, in fact, a profound darkness began to surround us. We *had to march*. The night was calm but freezing. Such a profound silence and such a complete calm reigned in the depths of these forests that you would have said that all the forces of nature were as if paralyzed there. You heard only the uncomfortable buzzing of mosquitoes and the noise of the steps of our horses. From time to time you noticed in the distance an Indian fire before which an austere and immobile profile was outlined in the smoke. At the end of an hour we arrived at a place where the road divided. Two paths opened at this spot. Which one to take? The choice was delicate; one of them led to a small stream whose depth we did not know, the other to a clearing. The rising moon then showed before us a valley full of debris. Further off we noticed two houses. It was so important not to get lost in [1332] such a place and at this hour that we resolved to get some information before going further. My companion remained to hold the horses, and throwing my rifle over my shoulder, I descended into the small valley. Soon I noticed that I was going into a very recent clearing; immense trees not yet stripped of their branches covered the ground. I managed by jumping from one to another to reach the houses rapidly enough, but the same stream that we had already encountered separated me from them. Fortunately [{the new proprietor of the place, probably wanting to establish a mill, had thrown trees into the stream to stop its flow}] its flow was hampered at this place by large oaks that the pioneer's ax had probably hurled there. I succeeded in sliding along these trees and I finally reached the other side. I approached these two houses with caution, fearing that they were Indian wigwams; they were still not finished; I found the doors open and no voice responded to mine. I returned to the banks of the stream where I could not help myself from admiring for several minutes the sublime horror of this place. The valley seemed to form an immense arena surrounded on all sides by the foliage of the woods like a black curtain, and at the center the light of the moon, breaking through, created a thousand fantastic images that played in silence amid the debris of the forest. Moreover, no noise whatsoever, no sound of life arose from this solitude. I finally thought of my companion and I cried out loudly to let him know the result of my search, to get him to cross the stream and to come to find me. My voice echoed for a long time amid the solitude that surrounded me. But I got no response. I cried out again and listened again. The same silence of death reigned in the forest. Worry seized me, and I ran along the stream to find the path that crossed its course farther down. Reaching there, I heard in the distance the step of horses and soon after I saw Beaumont himself. Astonished by my long absence, he had taken the gamble of advancing toward the stream; he was already in the shallows when I had called him. My voice had not been able to reach him. He told me that on his side he had made all efforts to make himself heard and, like me, had been frightened not to receive a response. Without the ford that served as our point of reunion, we would perhaps [1333] have searched for each other a large part of the night. We retook our route promising each other indeed not to separate again, and three quarters of an hour from there we finally noticed a clearing, two or three cabins, and what pleased us most, a light. The river that extended like a purple thread to the end of the valley conclusively proved to us that we had arrived at *Flint River*. Soon in fact the barking of dogs made the woods echo, and we found ourselves before a *log house* separated from us by a single fence. As we prepared to cross it, the moon revealed to us on the other side a large black bear standing upright on its paws and pulling on its chain, indicating as clearly as it could its intention to give us a very fraternal embrace. "What the devil is this country," I said, "where you have bears as watchdogs." "We must call," my companion replied to me. "If we try to cross the fence, we will have difficulty explaining the reason to the gatekeeper." So we shouted out so loudly and so well that a man finally appeared at the window. After examining us in the moonlight: "Come in, Sirs," he said to us; "Trinc, go lie down. To your kennel, I tell you. They are not robbers." The bear waddled away and we entered. We were half-dead with fatigue. We asked our [1334] host if we could have some oats. Surely, he said; he immediately began to reap the closest field with all American calm and doing it as he would have in full day. During this time we unsaddled our mounts and, not having a stable, tied them to the fences that we had just crossed. Having thus considered our travel

companions, we began to think about our shelter. There was only one bed in the house. Since it went to Beaumont by lot, I wrapped myself in my coat and, lying on the floor, slept as profoundly as is suitable for a man who has just done fifteen leagues on horseback.

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The next day, July 25, our first concern was to ask about a guide. A wilderness of fifteen leagues separates *Flint River* from Saginaw, and the road that leads there is a narrow path, scarcely recognizable by sight. Our host approved our plan and soon after he brought in two Indians in whom, he assured us, we could have complete confidence. One was a child, thirteen or fourteen years old. The other a young man of eighteen. The body of the latter, without yet having the vigorous forms of mature age, already gave the idea of agility combined with strength. He was of average height, his stature was straight and slim, his limbs flexible and well-proportioned. Long braids fell from his bare head. In addition he had carefully painted on his face black and red lines in the most symmetrical manner. A ring passed through the septum of his nose; a necklace and earrings completed his outfit. His war gear was no less remarkable. On one side a battle ax, the famous tomahawk; on the other, a long sharp knife with which the savages remove the scalp of the defeated. Around his neck was suspended a bull's horn that served as his powder flask, and he held a carbine with a grooved barrel in his right hand. As with most Indians, his look was fierce and his smile benevolent. Next to him, as if to complete the picture, walked a dog with upright ears, elongated muzzle, much more like a fox than any other [1335] type of animal, and whose fierce appearance was in perfect harmony with the countenance of the man leading it. After examining our new companion with an attention that he did not appear to notice for a single moment, we asked him what he wanted from us as the price for the service that he was going to give us. The Indian answered with a few words in his language and the American, hastening to speak, informed us that what the savage asked could be evaluated at two dollars. "Since these poor Indians," our host added charitably, "do not know the value of money, you will give me the dollars and I will gladly take charge of providing him the equivalent." I was curious to see what the worthy man called the equivalent of two dollars, and I followed him quietly into the place where the market was. I saw him deliver to our guide a pair of moccasins and a pocket handkerchief, objects whose total value certainly did not amount to half of the sum. The Indian withdrew very satisfied and I fled silently, saying like La Fontaine: Ah! if lions knew how to paint!

Moreover, it is not only Indians that the American pioneers take for fools. We ourselves were victims every day of their extreme greed for profit. It is very true that they do not steal. That have too much enlightenment to commit something so imprudent, but nonetheless I have never seen an innkeeper of a large city overcharge with more shamelessness than these inhabitants of the wilderness among whom I imagined to find primitive honesty and the simplicity of patriarchal mores.

Everything was ready. We mounted our horses and, fording the stream that forms the extreme limit between civilization and the wilderness, we entered for good into the empty forest.

Our two guides walked or rather leapt like wild cats over the obstacles in our path. If we happened to encounter a fallen tree, a stream, a swamp, they pointed with their finger to the best path, went by and did not even turn back to see us get by the difficulty; used to counting only on himself, the Indian conceives with difficulty that another man needs help. He knows how to serve you as needed, but no one has yet taught him the art of improving the service by consideration and concern. This way of acting would nonetheless have led to some comments on our part, but it was impossible [1336] to make a single word understood by our companions. And then! we felt completely in their power. There in fact the tables were turned; plunged into a perfect darkness, reduced to his own resources, civilized man walked blind, incapable, not only of finding his own way in the labyrinth that he was going through, but even of finding the means to sustain his life. It is amid these same difficulties that the savage triumphed; for him the forest had no veil, he found himself as if in his own country; he walked there with his head high, guided by an instinct surer than the compass of the navigator. At the top of the tallest trees, beneath the thickest foliage, his eye found the prey that the European would have passed and repassed in vain a hundred times.

From time to time our Indians stopped; they put their finger to their lips to indicate to us to be quiet and gestured to us to dismount. Guided by them, we came to a place where you could see game. It was a singular sight to see the disdainful smile with which they led us by the hand like children and brought us finally near the object that they had seen for a long time.

But as we advanced, the last traces of man faded. Soon everything ceased even to announce the presence of the savage, and we had before us the spectacle that we had been chasing for such a long time, the interior of a virgin forest.

In the middle of a not very dense thicket, through which objects at a fairly great distance could be seen, a tall cluster of trees composed almost totally of pines and oaks arose in a single burst. Forced to grow on a very limited terrain almost entirely without the rays of the sun, each of these trees goes up rapidly in order to find air and light. As straight as the mast of a ship, each tree does not take long to rise above everything that surrounds it. Having reached an upper region, it then tranquilly spreads its branches and surrounds itself with their shade. Others soon follow it into this elevated sphere and, intertwining their branches, all form like an immense [1337] canopy above the earth that supports them. Beneath this humid and unchanging vault, the appearance changes and the scene takes on a new character. A majestic order reigns above our heads. Near the earth everything presents on the contrary the image of confusion and of chaos. Some trunks, incapable of bearing their branches any longer, have split halfway from the top and no longer present anything to view except a sharp and broken tip. Others, shaken for a long time by the wind, have been thrown whole onto the ground; torn out of the earth, their roots form like so many natural ramparts behind which several men could easily take shelter. Immense trees, held up by the branches that surround them, rest suspended in air and fall into dust without touching the earth. Among us, there is no country, no matter how unpopulated, in which a forest is left alone enough for the trees, after tranquilly following their course, to fall finally due to decrepitude. It is man who strikes them in their prime and who rids the [1338]forest of their remains. [≠Our woods always present the image of youth or of strength. In the forests of the New World, on the contrary, you see trees of all ages, from the weakest shoot to the hundred-year-old oak.≠]In the uninhabited areas of America, nature in its omnipotence is the sole agent of ruin, as well as the sole power of reproduction. Just as in forests subjected to the dominion of man, death strikes here constantly; but no one takes responsibility for clearing the remains that death has caused. Every day adds to the amount. They fall, they accumulate on each other; time cannot reduce them to dust quickly enough to prepare new places. There side by side several generations of dead trees are found lying together. Some at the last stage of decay no longer offer anything to view except a long line of red dust drawn on the grass. But others, already half-consumed by time, still preserve their forms. There are some finally that, just fallen, still spread their long branches on the ground and halt the steps of the traveler with an obstacle that he had not expected. Amid these divers remains, the work of reproduction goes on without ceasing. Shoots, climbing plants, weeds of all types grow up across all the obstacles. They creep along the fallen trunks; they worm into their dust; they lift up and break the bark that still covers them. [They slip between these immobile cadavers, creep along their surface, penetrate beneath their withered bark, lift up and scatter their powdery remains.] Life and death here are as if face to face; they seem to have wanted to mix and mingle their work.

We often happened to admire one of those calm and serene evenings at sea, when the sails, flapping peacefully along the masts, leave the sailors not knowing from which direction the breeze will come. All of nature at rest is no less imposing in the uninhabited areas of the New World than on the immensity of the sea. When at midday the rays of the sun beat down on the forest, you often hear echoing in its depths something like a long moan, [1339] a plaintive cry that lingers in the distance. It is the final effort of the wind that is expiring. Then everything around you falls into a silence so profound, an immobility so complete that your soul feels penetrated by a sort of religious terror. The traveler stops, he looks around. Pressed together, intertwined in their branches, the trees of the forest seem to form only a single whole, an immense and indestructible edifice, under whose vaults reigns an eternal darkness. In no matter which direction he looks, he sees only a field of violence and destruction. Broken trees, torn trunks, everything announces that here the elements are perpetually at war. But the struggle is interrupted. You would say that at the order of a supernatural power, movement is suddenly halted. Half-broken branches still seem to hold on by a few hidden bonds to the trunk that no longer offers them support; trees already uprooted have not had the time to come to earth and remain suspended in the air. The traveler listens, he holds his breath with fear the better to grasp the slightest reverberation of existence; no sound, no murmur is heard.

More than once in Europe we happened to find ourselves lost deep in the woods, but always a few sounds of life came to our ears. It was the distant ringing from the church tower of the nearest village, the step of a traveler, the ax of the woodsman, the explosion of a firearm, the barking of a dog, or only that confused murmur that arises from a civilized country. Here, not only man is missing, but even the sound of animals is not heard. The smallest among them have left these places to move closer to human habitation; the largest, to move still further away. The animals that remain keep hidden out of the sunlight. Thus everything is immobile in the woods, everything is silent beneath its leaves. You would say that the Creator has for one moment turned His face away and that the forces of nature are paralyzed.

Not only in this case, moreover, did we notice the singular analogy that exists between the sight of the ocean and the appearance of a wild forest. In both spectacles, the idea of immensity assails you. The continuity of the same scenes, their monotony astonishes and hinders the imagination. We perhaps found the sentiment of isolation and abandonment that had seemed so heavy to us in the middle of the Atlantic stronger and more [1340] poignant in the uninhabited areas of the New World. On the sea at least the traveler contemplates a vast horizon toward which he directs his view with hope. But in this ocean of leaves, who can point out the road? Toward which objects to turn your eyes? In vain do you go up to the top of the largest trees; others still higher surround you. It is useless to climb hills; everywhere the forest seems to move with you, and this same forest extends before you from the Arctic Pole to the Pacific Ocean. You can travel thousands of leagues in its shadow, and you move always, but without appearing to change place.

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But it is time to return to the road to Saginaw. We had already walked for five hours in the most complete ignorance of the places where we found ourselves, when our Indians stopped and the oldest who was called Sagan-Cuisco drew a line in the sand. He pointed to one end while crying: Miché-Conté-Ouinque (the Indian name for *Flint River)* and the opposite end while pronouncing the name of Saginaw, and making a dot in the middle of the line, he indicated to us that we had reached the mid-point of the road and that we had to rest for a few moments. The sun was already high above the horizon and we would have accepted with pleasure the invitation made to us, if we had noticed water within reach. But not seeing any in the vicinity, we made a sign to the Indian that we wanted to eat and drink at the same time. He immediately understood us and began to walk again with the same rapidity as before. An hour later, he stopped again and showed us a place thirty steps away in the woods where he gestured that there was water. Without awaiting our response or without helping us un-saddle our horses, he went there himself; we hastened to follow him. The wind had recently overturned a large tree in this place. In the hole where its roots had been was a bit of rainwater. It was the fountain to which our guide led us without having the appearance of thinking that someone could hesitate to use such a drink. We opened our bag; another misfortune! The heat had absolutely spoiled our provisions and we were completely reduced to dining on a very small piece of bread, the only one we had been able to find at *Flint River*. Add to that a cloud of mosquitoes attracted by the presence of the water, that had to be battled with one hand while putting the [1341] piece of bread in your mouth with the other, and you will have the idea of a rustic dinner in a virgin forest. While we ate, our Indians remained seated, arms crossed, on the fallen trunk that I spoke about. When they saw that we had finished, they gestured to us that they also were hungry. We showed them our empty bag. They shook their heads without saying a word. The Indian does not know what regular hours for meals are. He gorges himself with food when he can and then goes without until he again finds something to satisfy the appetite. Wolves act the same in similar circumstances. Soon we thought about remounting, but we noticed with great fright that our mounts had disappeared. Bitten by mosquitoes and goaded by hunger they had gone away from the path where we had left them, and it was only with difficulty that we were able to find their trail. If we had remained inattentive for a quarter-hour more, we would have awakened like Sancho with a saddle between his legs. We blessed with all our hearts the mosquitoes that had made us think so quickly about leaving, and we resumed our way. The track that we followed did not take long to become more and more difficult to recognize. At every instant, our horses had to force their way through dense thickets or jump over immense tree trunks that barred our way. At the end of two hours of an extremely difficult road, we finally reached the bank of a river that was not very deep but steeply hemmed in. We forded it and, having reached the top of the opposite bank, we saw a field of corn and two cabins quite similar to *log houses*. We realized as we drew near that we were in a small Indian settlement. The *log houses* were wigwams. Moreover, the most profound solitude reigned there as in the surrounding forest. Coming before the first of these abandoned dwellings, Sagan-Cuisco stopped, he attentively examined all the surrounding objects, then putting down his carbine and approaching us, he first drew a line in the sand, indicating to us in the same way as before that we had not yet completed two-thirds of the road; then, getting up, he showed us the sun and made a sign that it was rapidly descending toward sunset. He then looked at the wigwam and closed his eyes. This language was very understandable; he wanted us to sleep in this place. I admit that the proposition greatly surprised and scarcely pleased us. We had not eaten since morning [1342] and we didn't care very much about sleeping without eating. The somber and wild majesty of the scenes that we had witnessed since morning, the total isolation in which we found ourselves, the fierce countenance of our guides with whom it was impossible to make a connection, nothing in all of that was of a nature to give us confidence. Moreover, there was something singular in

the behavior of the Indians that did not reassure us. The route that we had just followed for two hours seemed even less traveled than the one that we had followed before. No one had ever told us that we had to pass by an Indian village, and on the contrary everyone had assured us that you could go from Flint River to Saginaw in a single day. So we could not conceive why our guides wanted to keep us for the night in the wilderness. We insisted on moving. The Indians gestured that we would be surprised by darkness in the woods. To force our guides to continue on their road would have been a dangerous endeavor. We decided to tempt their greed. But the Indian is the most philosophical of all men. He has few needs and hence few desires. Civilization has no hold on him; he is unaware of or disdains its sweet pleasures. I had noticed, however, that Sagan-Cuisco had paid particular attention to a small bottle in wicker that hung at my side. A bottle that does not break is something whose utility he had grasped and that had aroused a real admiration in him. My rifle and my bottle were the only parts of my European gear that had appeared to arouse his envy. I gestured to him that I would give him my bottle if he led us immediately to Saginaw. The Indian then appeared violently torn. He looked again at the sun, then the ground. Finally making his decision, he grabbed his carbine; putting his hand to his mouth, he let out two cries of: Oh! Oh! and rushed before us into the undergrowth. We followed him at a fast trot, and forcing open a path before us, we had soon lost sight of the Indian dwellings. Our guides ran in this way for two hours more rapidly than they had done as yet; but night overtook us, and the last rays of the sun had just disappeared in the trees of the forest when Sagan-Cuisco was surprised by a violent nosebleed. However accustomed this young man as well as his brother seemed to be to bodily exercise, it was evident that fatigue and the lack of food began to exhaust his strength. We began to be afraid [1343] that they would give up the undertaking and would want to sleep at the foot of a tree. So we decided to have them alternately mount our horses. The Indians accepted our offer without astonishment or humility. It was something bizarre to see, these men half-naked seated solemnly on an English saddle and carrying our gamebags and our rifles slung over their shoulders, while we went with difficulty on foot before them. Night finally came, a freezing dampness began to spread under the foliage. Darkness then gave the forest a new and terrible appearance. The eye could no longer see anything around except masses heaped up in confusion, without order or symmetry, bizarre and disproportionate forms, incoherent scenes, fantastic images that seemed borrowed from the sick imagination of someone feverish. (The gigantesque and the ridiculous there were as close as in the literature of our time.) Never had our steps brought forth as many echoes; never had the silence of the forest seemed so fearsome to us. You would have said that the buzzing of the mosquitoes was the sole breath of this sleeping world. As we advanced, the shadows became deeper; only from time to time did a firefly crossing the woods trace a sort of luminous line in its depths. We recognized too late the correctness of the advice of the Indian, but it was no longer a matter of going back. So we continued to march as rapidly as our strength and the night allowed us to do. At the end of an hour we came out of the woods and found ourselves on a vast prairie. Our guides three times yelled out a savage cry that reverberated like discordant notes of the tom-tom. Someone answered in the distance. Five minutes later we were on the bank of a river whose opposite side the darkness prevented us from seeing. The Indians came to a halt at this place; they covered themselves with their blankets to avoid the biting of the mosquitoes; sleeping on the grass, they soon formed nothing more than a ball of wool hardly visible and in which it would have been impossible to recognize the form of a man. We ourselves stood on the ground and waited patiently for what would follow. At the end of several minutes a slight noise was heard and something approached the shore. It was an Indian canoe about ten feet long and formed out of a single tree. The man who was crouching at the bottom of this fragile small boat wore the costume and had all the appearance of [1344] an Indian. He addressed a word to our guides who at his command hastened to remove the saddles from our horses and to put them in the dugout. As I prepared to climb in, the supposed Indian advanced toward me, put two fingers on my shoulder and said to me with a Norman accent that made me start: “Don’t go too fast, there are times here when people drown.” My horse would have spoken to me, and I would not, I believe, have been more surprised. I viewed the man who had spoken to me and whose face, struck by the first light of the moon, then shone like a copper sphere: “So who are you,” I said to him; “French seems to be your language and you have the appearance of an Indian?” He answered me that he was a *bois-brulé,* that is to say the son of a Canadian man and an Indian woman. I will often have the occasion to speak about this singular race of half-breeds that covers all the frontiers of Canada and a part of those of the United States. For the moment I thought only about the pleasure of speaking my native language. Following the advice of our compatriot, the savage, I sat down at the bottom of the canoe and kept my balance as much as possible. The horse got into the river and began to swim as soon as

the Canadian pushed the skiff with the paddle, all the while singing in a low voice an old French tune, of whose verse I grasped only the first two lines:

- *Between Paris and Saint-Denis*
- *There was a girl*

We thus arrived without accident on the other side. The canoe returned immediately to get my companion. I will remember all my life the moment when for the second time it approached the shore. The moon, which was full, then rose precisely above the prairie that we had just crossed. Half of the circle of the moon appeared alone on the horizon; you would have said a mysterious door through which the light of another sphere escaped toward us. The moonlight that emerged reflected on the waters of the river [1345] and glistening reached me. On the very line on which this pale light shimmered, the Indian dugout advanced; you did not notice the oars, you did not hear the noise of the paddles, it glided rapidly and without effort, long, narrow and black, similar to an alligator of the Mississippi that stretched toward the bank to seize its prey. Crouched at the front of the canoe, Sagan-Cuisco, his head leaning against his knees, showed only the shining braids of his hair. At the other end, the Canadian rowed in silence, while behind him, the horse made the water of the Saginaw splash with the effort of his powerful chest. There was in this whole spectacle a wild grandeur that then made and has since left a profound impression on our souls. Disembarked on the shore we hurried to go to a house that the moon had just revealed to us one hundred steps from the river and where the Canadian assured us that we would be able to find shelter. We managed in fact to get settled comfortably there, and we would probably have regained our strength by a deep sleep if we had been able to rid ourselves of the myriad mosquitoes that filled the house; but that we could never manage to do. The animal that is called *mosquito* in English and *maringouin* in Canadian French is a small insect similar in everything to the *cousin* of France from which it differs only in size. It is generally larger and its proboscis is so strong and so sharp that woolen fabric alone can protect against its bites. These small gnats are the plague of the American wilderness. Their presence would be enough to make a long stay unbearable. As for me, I declare that I have never experienced a torment similar to what they made me suffer throughout the entire course of this trip and particularly during our stay at Saginaw. During the day they prevented us from drawing, writing, remaining still for a single moment; at night, they circled by the thousands around us; every part of the body that you left exposed served immediately as their rendezvous. Awakened by the pain caused by the bite, we covered our heads with our sheets; their sting passed through; chased, pursued by them in this way, we got up and went to breathe the outside air until fatigue finally brought us a difficult and interrupted sleep.

* * * * *

[1346]

We went out very early and the first sight that struck us as we left the house was the view of our Indians who, rolled up in their blankets near the door, slept next to their dogs.

We then saw for the first time in daylight the village of Saginaw that we had come so far to find.

A small cultivated plain, bordered on the south by a beautiful and tranquil river, on the east and on the north by the forest, makes up for the present the entire territory of the emerging city.

Near us arose a house whose structure announced the prosperity of the owner. It was the one where we had just spent the night. A dwelling of the same type was noticeable from the other end of the clearing. In between and along the edge of the woods, two or three *log houses* were half lost in the foliage. On the opposite bank of the river, a prairie extended like a limitless ocean on a calm day. A column of smoke escaped then from the prairie and climbed peacefully toward the sky. By following its direction toward the earth, we discovered two or three wigwams whose conical form and pointed tips blended into the grasses of the prairie.

An overturned plow, oxen returning to plowing, some half-wild horses completed the picture.

In whatever direction you looked, your eye searched in vain for the spire of a Gothic church tower, the wooden cross that marks the road, or the moss-covered doorway of the presbytery. These venerable remnants of ancient Christian civilization have not been carried into the wilderness; nothing there yet awakens the idea of the past or of the future. You do not even find places of rest consecrated to those who are no more. Death has not had the time to reclaim its sphere or mark out its field.

Here man still seems to come furtively into life. Several generations do [1347] not gather around his cradle to express hopes that are often false, and to give themselves to premature joys that the future will belie. His name is not inscribed in the records of the city. Religion does not come to mix its touching solemnities with the solicitudes of the family. The prayers of a woman, a few drops of water poured on the head of the infant by the hand of the father, quietly open the gates of heaven to him.

The village of Saginaw is the last point inhabited by Europeans to the northwest of the vast Michigan peninsula. It can be considered like an outpost, a sort of sentry point that whites have placed amid the Indian nations.

The revolutions of Europe, the tumultuous clamor that is constantly arising from the civilized world, reach here only now and then, and are like the echo of a sound whose nature and origin the ears cannot make out.

Sometimes it will be an Indian who, while passing, will recount with the poetry of the wilderness some of these sad realities of the life of society; a forgotten newspaper in the knapsack of a hunter; or only that vague rumor that is propagated by unknown voices and almost never fails to alert men that something extraordinary is happening under the sun.

Once a year, a ship ascending the course of the Saginaw comes to reconnect this link detached from the great European chain that already envelops the world with its coils. It brings to the new settlement the diverse products of industry and in turn takes away the fruits of the land.

At the time of our passage, thirty persons alone, men, women, old people and children, composed this small society, an embryo scarcely formed, an emerging seed entrusted to the wilderness, that the wilderness is to make fruitful.

Chance, interest, or passions had gathered these thirty persons in this narrow space. Moreover, no common bond existed between them and they differed profoundly from each other. You noticed Canadians, Americans, Indians and half-breeds there.

Philosophers have believed that human nature everywhere the same only varied according to the institutions and the laws of different societies. That is one of those opinions that every page of the history of the world seems to belie. Nations, like individuals, all appear with a physiognomy that is [1348] their own. The characteristic features of their countenance are reproduced throughout all the transformations that they undergo. Laws, mores, religions change, empire and wealth are displaced; the external appearance varies, the dress differs, prejudices fade or are substituted for others. Among these diverse changes you always recognize the same people. Something inflexible appears amid human flexibility.

The men who inhabit this small, cultivated plain belong to two races that for nearly a century have existed on the American soil and obeyed the same laws. [{Before coming to America, their fathers had lived under the same European sky; an arm of the sea more narrow than the Saint Lawrence River separated their countries.}] But they have nothing in common between them. They are English and French, just as they appear on the banks of the Seine and the Thames.

Enter this cabin of foliage, you will meet a man whose cordial welcome and open countenance will announce to you from the beginning the taste for social pleasures and lack of concern about life. At the first moment you will perhaps take him for an Indian; subjected to savage life, he has willingly adopted their habits, customs and almost their mores. He wears moccasins, a hat of otter-skin, a woolen blanket. He is an indefatigable hunter, lying in wait, living on wild honey and buffalo meat. This man has nonetheless still remained no less a Frenchman, cheerful, enterprising, self-important, proud of his origins, passionate lover of military glory, more vain than self-interested, a man of instinct, obeying his first movement rather than his reason, preferring making a stir to making money. In order to come to the wilderness he seems to have broken all the bonds that attached him to life; you see him with neither wife nor children. This condition is contrary to his mores, but he submits to it easily as to everything. Left to himself, he would naturally feel the stay-at-home mood; no one more than he has the taste for the domestic hearth; no one loves more to delight his sight with the appearance of the paternal church tower; but he has been torn despite himself from his tranquil habits; his imagination has been struck by new images; he has been transplanted beneath another sky; this same man feels suddenly possessed by an insatiable need for violent emotions, vicissitudes and dangers. The most civilized European has become the worshipper of savage life. He will prefer the plains to the streets of the city, hunting to [1349] agriculture. He will make light of existence and live without concern for the future.

The whites of France, said the Indians of Canada, are as good hunters as we. Like us, they scorn the comforts of life and face the terrors of death. God had created them to inhabit the cabin of the savage and to live in the wilderness.

A few steps from this man lives another European who, subject to the same difficulties, became steeled against them.

This man is cold, tenacious, mercilessly argumentative; he attaches himself to the land, and tears all that he can take from savage life. He struggles constantly against it; he despoils it daily of some of its attributes. He transports into the wilderness, piece by piece, his laws, his habits, his customs and, if he

can, even the slightest refinements of his advanced civilization. The emigrant of the United States values from victory only its results; he holds that glory is a vain noise and that man comes into the world only to acquire comfort and the conveniences of life. Brave nonetheless, but brave by calculation, brave because he has discovered that there were several things more difficult to bear than death. Adventurer surrounded by his family, yet who little values intellectual pleasures and the charms of social life.

Placed on the other side of the river, amid the reeds of the Saginaw, the Indian from time to time casts a stoic glance on the habitations of his brothers from Europe. Do not think that he admires their works, or envies their lot. For the nearly three hundred years that the savage of America has struggled against the civilization that pushes and surrounds him, he has not yet learned to know and to esteem his enemy. The generations follow each other in vain among the two races. Like two parallel rivers, they flow for three hundred years toward a common abyss; a narrow space separates them, but they do not blend their waves. Not, nonetheless, that the native of the New World lacks natural aptitude, but his nature seems stubbornly to reject our ideas and our arts. Seated on his blanket amid the smoke of his hut, the Indian looks with scorn on the comfortable dwelling of the [1350] European; as for him, he proudly takes pleasure in his misery, and his heart swells and rises at the images of his barbaric independence. He smiles bitterly seeing us torment our lives in order to acquire useless riches. What we call industry, he calls shameful subjection. He compares the farmer to the ox that painfully traces his furrow. What we call the conveniences of life, he calls the toys of children or the refinements of women. He only envies our weapons. When man can shelter his head for the night under a tent of leaves, when he is able to light a fire to chase away the mosquitoes in the summer and to protect himself from cold in the winter, when his dogs are good and the country full of game, what more can he ask from the eternal Being?

On the other bank of the Saginaw, near the European clearings and so to speak on the borders of the Old and the New World, arises a rustic cabin more comfortable than the wigwam of the savage, more crude than the home of the civilized man. This is the dwelling of the half-breed. When we presented ourselves for the first time at the door of this half-civilized hut, we were completely surprised to hear in the interior a soft voice that chanted hymns of penitence to an Indian tune. We stopped a moment to listen. The modulations of sound were slow and profoundly melancholy; we easily recognized the plaintive harmony that characterizes all the songs of the man of the wilderness. We entered. The master was absent. Seated in the middle of the room, her legs crossed on a mat, a young woman worked making moccasins; with her foot she rocked an infant whose coppery color and features announced its double origin. This woman was dressed like one of our peasant women, except that her feet were naked and her hair fell freely over her shoulders. Seeing us, she became quiet with a kind of respectful fear. We asked her if she was French. “No,” she answered smiling. “English?” “Not that either,” she said; she lowered her eyes and added: “I am only a savage.” Child of two races, raised using two languages, nourished with diverse beliefs and reared with opposing prejudices, the half-breed forms a combination as inexplicable to others as to himself. The images of the world, when his crude brain happens to think about them, appear to him only as an inextricable chaos which his mind cannot escape. Proud of his European origin, he scorns the wilderness, and yet he loves the wild liberty that reigns there. He admires civilization and cannot completely [1351] submit to its dominion. His tastes are in contradiction to his ideas, his opinions to his mores. Not knowing how to be guided by the uncertain light that illumines it, his soul struggles painfully, wrapped in a universal doubt. He adopts opposing customs; he prays at two altars; he believes in the Redeemer of the world and in the amulets of the medicine man; and he reaches the end of his course not having been able to sort out the obscure problem of his existence.

So in this forgotten corner of the world the hand of God had already sown the seeds of diverse nations; several different races, several distinct peoples already find themselves face to face.

Some exiled members of the great human family have met in the immensity of the woods, their needs are common; they have to struggle together against the beasts of the forest, hunger, the harshness of the seasons. They are hardly thirty in the middle of a wilderness in which everything rejects their efforts, and they cast on each other only looks of hatred and suspicion. Skin color, poverty or comfort, ignorance or enlightenment have already established indestructible classifications among them; national prejudices, the prejudices of education and birth divide them and isolate them.

Where to find in a more narrow frame a more complete picture of the miseries of our nature? A feature is still missing however.

The deep lines that birth and opinion have drawn between the destinies of these men, do not cease with life, but extend beyond the tomb. Six diverse religions or sects share the faith of this emerging society.
Catholicism with its formidable immobility, its absolute dogmas, its terrible anathemas and immense rewards, the religious anarchy of the Reformation, the ancient paganism find their representatives here. The unique and eternal Being who created all men in His image is worshipped here in six different ways. Men fight fervently over the heaven that each man claims exclusively as his heritage. Even more, amid the miseries of the wilderness and the misfortunes of the present, the human imagination still exhausts itself giving birth to a future of inexpressible pains. The Lutheran condemns the Calvinist to eternal fire; the Calvinist, the Unitarian; and the Catholic envelops them all in a common reprobation.
More tolerant in his crude faith, the Indian limits himself to exiling his [1352] European brother from the happy hunting grounds that he reserves for himself. As for him, faithful to the confused traditions that his fathers bequeathed to him, he easily consoles himself for the evils of life and dies peacefully dreaming of forests always green that will never be disturbed by the ax of the pioneer, and where the deer and the beaver will come to offer themselves to his shots during the days without number of eternity.
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After breakfast we went to see the richest proprietor of the village, Mr. Williams. We found him in his shop selling to the Indians a multitude of objects of little value such as knives, glass necklaces, ear pendants. It was pitiful to see how these unfortunate men were treated by their civilized brothers from Europe. Moreover, all those that we saw there acknowledged something striking about the savages. They were good, inoffensive, a thousand times less inclined to theft than the white. It was too bad, however, that they were beginning to become informed about the value of things. And why, please? Because the profits of the trade that we conduct with them became less considerable every day. Do you see here the superiority of the civilized man? The Indian would have said in his crude simplicity, that everyday he found it more difficult to deceive his neighbor. But the white finds in the perfection of language a fortunate nuance that expresses the thing and spares the shame.
Returning from Mr. Williams we had the idea of going up the Saginaw for a distance in order to shoot the wild ducks that populate its banks. While we were busy with this hunt, a dugout came out of the reeds of the river and some Indians came to meet us in order to look at my rifle that they had seen from afar. I always noticed that this weapon, which was, however, nothing extraordinary, attracted an entirely special consideration from the savages. A rifle that can kill two men in one second and fire in the fog was, according to them, a marvel above all estimation, a masterpiece beyond price. Those who came up to us displayed as usual a great admiration. They asked where my rifle came from. Our young guide answered that it had been made on the other side of the Great Water, among the fathers of the Canadians; this did not make it, as you can believe, less precious in their eyes. They observed, however, that since the sight was not placed in the [1353] middle of each barrel, you could not be as certain about the shot, a remark to which I admit that I did not know what to answer.
When evening came we climbed back into the canoe and, relying on the experience that we had gained during the morning, we went alone to go up an arm of the Saginaw that we had only seen briefly.
[{I do not believe that I have ever in my life more strongly felt this type of pleasure, at once physical and intellectual, that beautiful nature and a serene evening make you feel.}] The sky was cloudless, the atmosphere pure and still. The river flowed through an immense forest, but so slowly that is was almost impossible to say in which direction the current went. We always felt that, to have an accurate idea of the forests of the New World, it would be necessary to follow a few of the rivers that circulate in their shadow. The rivers are like great roads with which Providence has taken care, since the beginning of the world, to pierce the wilderness to make it accessible to man. When you clear a passage through the woods, the view is most often very limited. Moreover, the very path that you walk along is a human work. Rivers on the contrary are roads that respect no trails, and their banks freely show all that a vigorous vegetation, left to itself, can offer of great and interesting spectacles.
The wilderness was there such as it probably presented itself six thousand years ago to the view of our first fathers; an uninhabited space, flowering, delicious, fragrant; a magnificent dwelling place, a living palace, built for man, but where the master had not yet entered. The canoe glided effortlessly and noiselessly; around us reigned a universal serenity and quiet. We ourselves did not take long to feel as though weakened at the sight of such a spectacle. Our words began to become more and more rare; soon we expressed our thoughts only in a low voice. Finally we became silent, and simultaneously withdrawing our paddles, we both fell into a tranquil reverie full of inexpressible charms.

Why do human languages that find so many words for all the pains meet an invincible obstacle to making the sweetest and most natural emotions of the heart understood? Who will ever portray with fidelity those moments so rare in life when physical well-being prepares you for moral tranquillity and when something like a perfect equilibrium in the universe [1354] is established before your eyes; when the soul, half asleep, balances between the present and the future, between the real and the possible; when, surrounded by beautiful nature, breathing a tranquil and mild atmosphere, at peace with himself, amid a universal peace, man lends an ear to the steady beating of his arteries, each pulse of which marks the passage of time that for him seems to flow drop by drop into eternity. Many men perhaps have seen the years of a long life accumulate without once experiencing anything similar to what we have just described. Those men cannot understand us. But there are some, we are sure, who will find in their memories and at the bottom of their hearts something to color our pictures with and, while reading us, will feel the recollection reawakened of a few fleeting hours that neither time nor the positive cares of life have been able to erase.

We were drawn out of our reverie by a rifle shot that suddenly echoed in the woods. The noise seemed at first to roll with a roar on the two banks of the river; then rumbling, it moved further away, until it was entirely lost in the depths of the surrounding forests. You would have said a long and fearsome war cry that civilization shouted out in its advance.

One evening in Sicily, we happened to get lost in a vast swamp that now occupies the place where formerly the city of Imera was built; the sight of this famous city that had become a wild abandoned place made a great and profound impression on us. Never in our path had we encountered a more magnificent witness to the instability of things human and to the miseries of our nature. Here, it was also an uninhabited place, but imagination, instead of going backward and trying to return toward the past, on the contrary rushed ahead and lost itself in an immense future. We wondered by what singular permission of destiny, we who had been able to contemplate the ruins of empires that no longer exist and to walk in the deserts of human making, we, children of an old people, were led to be present at one of the scenes of the primitive world and to see the still empty cradle of a great nation. These are not the more or less random predictions of wisdom. They are facts as certain as if they were accomplished. In a few years these impenetrable forests will have fallen. The noise of civilization and industry will break the silence of the Saginaw. Its echo will become silent.... Wharves will imprison its banks. Its waters that today flow ignored [1355] and tranquil amid a nameless wilderness will be forced back in their course by the prow of ships. Fifty leagues still separate this uninhabited area from the large European settlements, and we are perhaps the last travelers allowed to contemplate it in its primitive splendor, so great is the impulse that carries the white race toward the complete conquest of the New World.

It is this idea of destruction, this lurking thought of a near and inevitable change that, according to us, gives to the wilderness of America so original a character and so touching a beauty. You see it with a melancholy pleasure; you hurry in a way to admire it. The idea of this natural and wild grandeur that is going to end mingles with the magnificent images given birth by the triumphant march of civilization. You feel proud to be a man, and at the same time you feel I do not know what bitter regret about the power that God granted us over nature. The soul is agitated by contrasting ideas, sentiments, but all the impressions that it receives are great and leave a profound trace.

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We wanted to leave Saginaw the next day, July 27; but because one of our horses has been hurt by its saddle, we decided to remain one more day. Lacking another way to pass the time, we went hunting in the prairies that border the Saginaw below the cleared areas. These prairies are not swampy, as you might believe. They are more or less wide plains where there are no trees although the land is excellent. The grass is hard and three to four feet high. We found only a little game and returned early. The heat was suffocating as at the approach of a storm, and the mosquitoes even more troublesome [1356] than usual. We walked always surrounded by a dense cloud of these insects against which we had to wage a perpetual war. Woe to the man who was forced to stop. He delivered himself defenseless to a merciless enemy. I recall having been forced to load my rifle while running, so difficult was it to stand still for an instant.

As we crossed the prairie on our return, we noticed that the Canadian who served as our guide followed a small marked path and looked with the greatest care at the ground before putting down his foot. “So why are you taking so many precautions,” I said to him; “are you afraid of getting wet?” “No,” he answered. “But I have acquired the habit when I cross the prairies always to look where I put my foot in order not to step on a rattlesnake.” “What the devil,” I began again, jumping onto the path, “are there rattlesnakes here?” “Oh yes indeed,” replied my American Norman with an imperturbable sang-

froid, *"the prairie is full of them."* I then reproached him for not warning us sooner. He claimed that since we wore good shoes and since the rattlesnake never bit above the ankle, he had not believed that we ran any great danger.

I asked him if the bite of the rattlesnake was fatal. He answered that you always died from it in less than twenty-four hours, if you did not appeal to the Indians. They know a remedy that, given in time, saved the patient, he said.

Whatever the case, during all the rest of the way we imitated our guide and, like him, looked at our feet.

The night that followed this scorching day was one of the most difficult that I have ever passed in my life. The mosquitoes had become so troublesome that, although I was overcome by fatigue, it was impossible for me to close my eyes. Toward midnight the storm that had threatened for a long time finally broke. Not able to hope for sleep, I got up and opened the door of our cabin in order at least to breathe the cool night air. It was not raining yet, the air seemed calm; but the forest was already shaking and out of it came deep moanings and long clamorings. From time to time a lightning bolt happened to illuminate the sky. The tranquil flow of the Saginaw, the small cleared area that bordered the river, the roofs of five or six cabins, and the belt of foliage that surrounded us, appeared then for an instant like an evocation of the future. Afterward everything was lost in the deepest darkness, [1357] and the formidable voice of the wilderness began again to make itself heard.

I was witnessing this great spectacle with emotion, when I heard a sigh at my side, and in the flash of a lightning bolt I noticed an Indian pressed like me against the wall of our dwelling. The storm had probably interrupted his sleep, for he cast a fixed and troubled eye on the objects around him.

Was this man afraid of thunder? Or did he see in the clash of elements something other than a passing convulsion of nature? These fleeting images of civilization that loomed up as if by themselves amid the tumult of the wilderness, did they have a prophetic meaning for him? These moans from the forest that seemed to struggle in an unequal contest, did they come to his ear like a secret warning from God, a solemn revelation of the final fate reserved for the savage races? I cannot say. But his restless lips seemed to murmur a few prayers, and all his features were stamped with a superstitious terror.

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At five o'clock in the morning, we thought about our departure. All the Indians in the neighborhood of Saginaw had disappeared; they had left to go to receive the presents that the English give to them each year, and the Europeans were engaged in the work of the harvest. So we had to accept going back through the forest without a guide. The undertaking was not as difficult as you could believe. There is generally only one path in these vast uninhabited places, and it is only a matter of not losing the trail in order to reach the end of the journey.

So at five o'clock in the morning, we recrossed the Saginaw; we received the good-byes and the final advice of our hosts, and turning the heads of our horses, we found ourselves alone in the middle of the forest. It was not, I admit, without a grave feeling that we began to penetrate its humid depths. This same forest that then surrounded us extended behind us to the Pole and to the Pacific Ocean. A single inhabited point separated us from the limitless wilderness, and we had just left it. These thoughts, moreover, only led us to hasten the pace of our horses, and at the end of three hours we reached an abandoned wigwam and the solitary banks of the Cass River. [1358] A point of grass that went down to the river in the shade of large trees served as our table, and we began to have lunch, having before us the view of the river whose waters, as clear as crystal, meandered through the woods.

Coming from the wigwam of the Cass River we encountered several paths. Someone had indicated to us which one we should take; but it was easy to forget a few points, or to be misunderstood in such explanations. That is what we did not fail to experience that day. The person had spoken to us about two roads, there were three; it is true that among these three roads, two came together as one further on, as we learned after, but we did not know it then and our difficulty was great.

After looking carefully, discussing things well, we did as nearly all great men do and acted more or less by chance. We forded the river as well as we could and plunged rapidly toward the southwest. More than once the path seemed ready to disappear amid the undergrowth; in other places the road seemed so little used that we had trouble believing that it led anywhere other than to some abandoned wigwam. Our compass, it is true, showed us that we were always going in the right direction. Nevertheless, we were completely reassured only when we found the place where we had eaten three days earlier. A gigantic pine whose trunk, broken by the wind, we had admired, led us to recognize the spot. We did not, however, continue our course any less rapidly, for the sun was beginning to go down. Soon we reached a clearing that usually precedes cleared lands, and as night began to surprise us we

saw the Flint River. A half-hour later, we found ourselves at the door of our host. This time the bear welcomed us as old friends and got up on its hind legs only to celebrate with joy our happy return.

During this entire day we had encountered no human face. On their side, the animals had disappeared; they had probably retreated beneath the foliage to escape the heat of the day. Only now and then did we find at the bare top of some dead tree, a hawk that, immobile on a single leg and sleeping tranquilly in the rays of the sun, seemed sculpted in the same wood that it had used for support.

It was amid this profound solitude that we thought suddenly about the Revolution of 1830 [whose clearest result until now to my knowledge is to [1359] have sent Charles X to Edinburgh, {Louis-Philippe to St. Cloud and us to Saginaw}] whose first anniversary we had just reached. I cannot say with what impetuosity the memories of July 29 took hold of our minds. The cries and the smoke of combat, the noise of the cannon, the rumble of the musketry, the still more horrible ringing of the tocsin, this entire day with its fiery atmosphere seemed to emerge suddenly from the past and to come before me like a living tableau. It was only a sudden illumination, a passing dream. When, raising my head, I looked around me, the apparition had already vanished; but never had the silence of the forest seemed more chilling, its shadows more somber, or its solitude more complete.