

CLOVER LAND

Marquette County, Largest in Michigan, Has Fine Sheep Record

MARQUETTE county is the largest county in the state of Michigan. It covers an area of 1,870 square miles, or 1,196,800 acres. The state of Rhode Island contains only 1,248 square miles, while Delaware is a trifle larger with its 2,370 square miles.

The county is known throughout the country as the Iron district of Michigan. There are in existence today thirty-three working mines. Although the county is famous for its iron production, there is no reason why it cannot become famous for its livestock and field crops. There are today in round numbers, 900 farmers in the county owning approximately 100,000 acres. This is only one-twelfth of the total area of the county. There are fifty complete townships in the county six miles square besides several smaller ones made such by the frontage on Lake Superior. There are nineteen of these townships without a farmer owning an acre of land and twenty-one more with only a few, or in other words, most of the existing farms are located in ten townships.

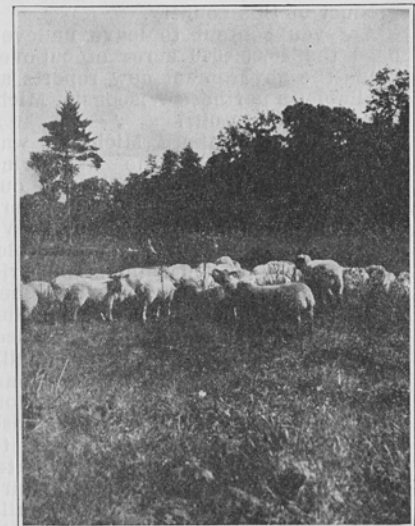
Some would naturally think that the best land would be taken up by the first settlers. This is only true in this way: The best land near a mining town or lake port. The land too



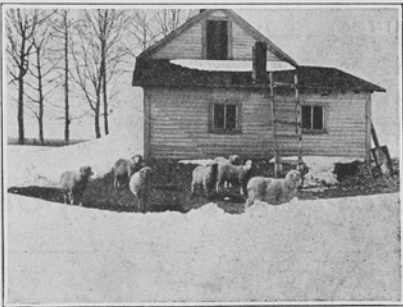
Inside Mr. Roberts' winter shed. This shows what has been done, although we do not recommend so many cracks in boards.

far from market or from a good road has been last to be taken up by the settler even though the soil and other natural conditions are the best. The natural results that have followed are that the best agricultural township in the county has not a farmer within its border and its northern boundary line is only nine miles from Ishpeming, a city of 13,000 population.

The surface geology of the northern peninsula of Michigan, Publication No. 7, by Frank Leverette, classifies the soils of Marquette county as follows: Swamp 389 square miles; rocky knobs



George Roberts' sheep in pasture on Sept. 15, 1918. Notice the lambs.



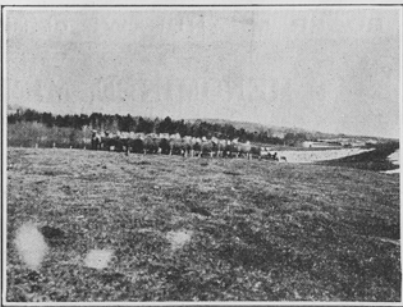
Sheep on A. G. Johnson's farm, near Skandia

475 square miles; clay till, 13 square miles; sandy till, 586 square miles; sandy, 38 square miles; and sandy gravel, 369 square miles.

The swampy areas comprise about 21 per cent of the total area, but when the timber is all cut and the streams cleaned out a large part of this area will be naturally drained and the rest or at least most of the remainder can be readily drained. Twenty-five per cent of the area is so-called rocky knobs and ridges. The actual area embraced in the knobs is much less than this figure as given by Mr. Leverett, as he has not taken in consideration the areas between knobs or ridges which in many instances are owned by farmers and excellent crops grown. These knobs and ridges are in many instances, in fact in most instances, covered with small growth of timber and grass wherever the rock is covered with soil. There are thirteen square miles of clay till in the county. Eight square miles of this is in a county without a settler and the other five square miles is in a township with only a few farmers as yet. Over thirty-one per cent, or 586 square miles of the soil of the county is known as a sandy till and this is all good farming or the best of grazing land. The clay and sandy till areas total more than the entire size of many southern peninsula counties. There are 38 square miles of sandy soil and 362 square miles of sandy gravel. This sandy soil is usually fairly level and covered in the summer with sweet fern, blue berries and a wild grass. This class of soil has not been worked to any extent as yet, in fact it is doubtful if it will ever make profitable farms, but it seems to the writer that it can and will be used for sheep pasturage. It is believed that this lighter soil will maintain at least one sheep to the acre during the summer months.

The soil, streams, surface conditions and climate make Marquette county an ideal county for sheep. There are sections after sections and township after township without any farmers waiting for a settler to clear the land and make it into a farm or for a herdsman to pasture his sheep or cattle. There are thousands of acres of good grass and clover going to waste every year.

In 1910 there were 185 sheep in the county. There were about this same number in 1916. During the summer and fall of 1917 the county agent put on a sheep campaign with the results of putting breeding ewes on forty farms. Pure bred Hampshire rams



George Starkey's sheep at Republic, March 19, 1918

were purchased and these ewes were bred to pure bred rams. The banks of the county aided in the purchase of the ewes. The farmer who wished to do so could pay half of the purchase price and the bank took a mortgage on the sheep for the balance. The banks were made secure by the mortgage and also by the backing of the County Farm Bureau organization. The sheep were brought into the county in November of 1917 and today the sheep are all paid for and no mortgages foreclosed or even thought of.

Complete records have been kept of some of these sheep and the following are given: Andrew G. Johnson of Skandia purchased eight yearling western ewes at a cost of \$120. They cost him \$19.20 to winter, including labor; \$4.00 to shear. He lost one by choking to death. Interest on money invested \$7.20. He received \$30 for the wool, \$105 for the lambs, and sold the seven remaining ewes at \$105. The manure was estimated at \$5.00. This gave a net return of \$94.60, or \$11.82 per head. He had a 100 per cent drop of lambs and saved them all.

George Roberts, also of Skandia, bought 22 yearling ewes and a pure bred ram. His total cost was \$364. The expenses for the year were \$121.30. Mr. Roberts had never sheared sheep and he did the job himself at a cost of \$18. He learned how, so it will be less next time. Mr. Roberts received \$97 for his wool. He had a 90.5 per cent drop of lambs, but saved only 74 per cent because a brood sow helped herself to several of the newborn. Even at this loss he made a net profit of \$6.55 per head. Mr. Roberts was so well pleased that he has bought several more and intends to make sheep his major farm crop.

Louis Ahola of Republic purchased four aged western ewes at a cost of \$51.32. He had a 100 per cent drop of lambs and saved them all. His total expenses were \$26.00. He sold the wool for \$24. and valued his four lambs at \$40 and manure at \$6.00, leaving him a net profit of \$11 per head.

George Starkey of Republic purchased 50 aged ewes and two Hampshire rams at a cost of \$701. They cost to winter with other expenses \$399.23. He lost six by death. He received for wool \$189. He raised 41 lambs valued at \$451. Estimating the value of the manure at \$150, gives him a net return of \$390.77, or \$7.51 per head on his original 52 head.

Table showing the results of the four flocks given above:

Size of Flock	Value of Flock	Total Expense	Return		Net Flock	Return Per Head	% of Born	% of Saved
			Wool	Lambs				
8	\$120.00	\$ 45.40	\$ 30.00	\$105.00	\$ 94.60	\$ 11.82	100	100
23	364.00	121.30	97.00	150.00	151.00	6.55	90.5	74
4	51.32	26.00	24.00	40.00	44.00	11.00	100	100
52	701.00	399.23	189.00	451.00	390.77	7.70	94	87
87	1236.32	591.93	340.00	746.00	680.37	36.07	384.5	361

Average flock, 21 head.
Average value per head, \$14.21.
Average expense per head, \$6.80.
Average return for wool, \$3.92.
Average return for lambs, \$10.97.
Average net returns of flock per head, \$7.82.
Average per cent. of profit on investment, 55 per cent.
Average per cent. of lambs dropped, 96 per cent.
Average per cent. of lambs saved, 90 per cent.

There are today approximately 2,000 head of breeding ewes in the county. Every man who has sheep is very much pleased. Many more of the farmers would have sheep but fencing has been prohibitive in price. Several sections of the county have been pastured during the past summer by sheep brought in from the west and one man, F. K. Hewlett, is wintering a herd of over a thousand breeding ewes.

There are many inquiries received in regard to wintering sheep in this section. Mr. Roberts of Skandia wintered his sheep in an open shed and he has told me that the sheep preferred sleeping outside most of the time all last winter, going inside only during stormy weather. The accompanying views will show Mr. Roberts'



George Roberts' open sheep shed at Skandia, March 15, 1918

shed. The sheep came through the winter in fine shape. Before lambing season Mr. Roberts lined the shed with building paper and battened the cracks so that he now has an ideal shed for wintering his sheep.

From what has been said about the size of the county, about the soil, the climate; the large areas of cut-over land available for pasturage and for the settler, and from the reports of the small flocks kept during the last year, it looks as though Marquette

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Type of ram used with western ewes, in Marquette county