

**SKETCHES OF LIBERIA:  
COMPRISING A BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF THE GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE,  
PRODUCTIONS; AND DISEASES,  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649199846

Sketches of Liberia: comprising a brief account of the geography, climate, productions; and diseases, of the republic of Liberia by J. W. Lugenbeel

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**J. W. LUGENBEEL**

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OF THE

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OF THE

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.

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BY J. W. LUGENBEEL,

Late Colonial Physician and U. S. Agent in Liberia.  
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UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA  
WASHINGTON

C. ALEXANDER, PRINTER,

1850.

DT624

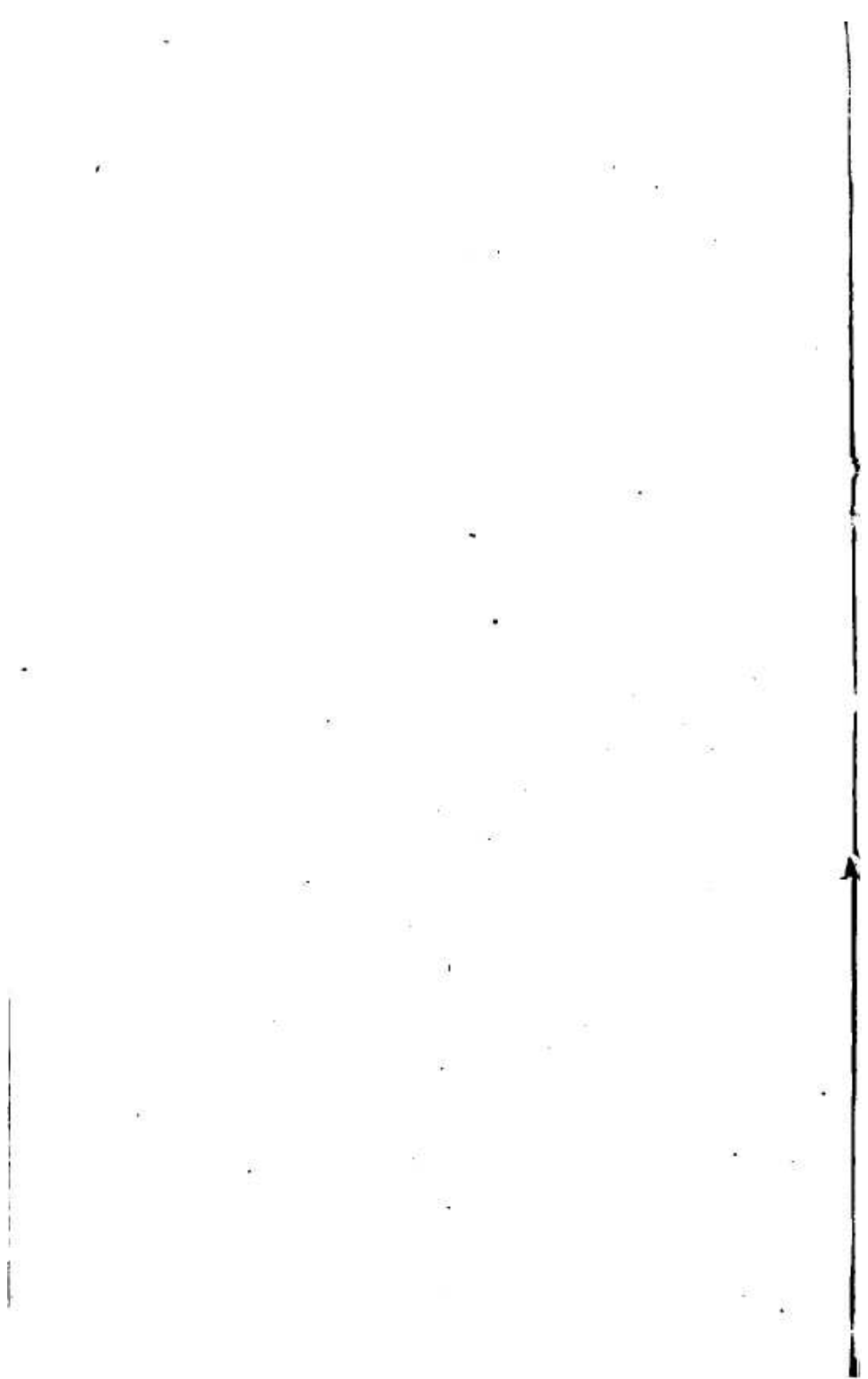
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## SKETCHES OF LIBERIA.

## INTRODUCTION.

A decided conviction of the necessity of a work in which the earnest inquirer may find the principal topics of information, which he may desire, respecting the Republic of Liberia, is the motive which has induced the author of these sketches to consent to their publication. His long residence in Liberia, and the great care with which he endeavored to make observations, and to acquire information from the most authentic sources, embolden him to believe that these sketches, presented as they are with the utmost ingenuousness, are worthy the candid consideration of all who desire a knowledge of the truth, respecting the condition and prospects of the little African Republic. Though they may possibly contain some slight inaccuracies, yet the author believes that a more truthful, comprehensive, and impartial account of matters and things as they really exist in Liberia, has not been given to the public. And with no other motive in view than a desire to impart needful and correct information, he leaves this little work to the candid perusal of the unbiased reader; in the hope that some good may result from this part of his labors in the cause of humanity.

It was his design at first to preface these sketches with an outline of the history of Liberia, but fearing that this would too greatly swell the size of this pamphlet, he has concluded to omit all historical de-

tails, and to present a simple and concise account of *Liberia as it is*. It may not be amiss, however, to state briefly, for the information of those persons whose attention has not been particularly directed to the rise and progress of the young Republic, that the first company of emigrants sent from this country under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, embarked at New York, in February, 1820. They did not, however, succeed in establishing a permanent asylum for themselves and for their followers and descendants, until the early part of the year 1822; at which time the American flag was first hoisted on Cape Mesurado, the site of the present handsome and flourishing town of Monrovia. From that time, the little colony continued to progress, with various trials and discouragements, under the government of the indefatigable Ashmun, and other white persons sent out from time to time by the Colonization Society, until the early part of 1839, when, under the government of Thomas Buchanan, Esq., the "Commonwealth" was established; marking a new epoch in the progress as well as in the history of Liberia. Gov. Buchanan having died while in the discharge of the arduous and responsible duties of his station, the management of the government devolved on Gen. Joseph J. Roberts, the Lieutenant Governor, who was appointed Governor of the Commonwealth by the

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 Geography—Extent of territory.
 

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Colonization Society, soon after the melancholy tidings of the death of Governor Buchanan reached the United States; and who continued to fill the office, under the auspices of the Society, until the establishment of the Republic, and the consequent new organization of the Government.

In the month of July, 1847, a convention of delegates, elected by the people, met at Monrovia, and formed the Constitution of the REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, which, with a declaration of independence, was given to the people, and published to the world. And in the month of October of that year, Gov. Roberts was elected the first President of the Republic. During the succeeding year, the independence of the Republic of Liberia was formally recognized and acknowledged by the Governments of Great Britain and France. And thus, in about

twenty-six years from the time of the founding of a little colony on the western coast of Africa, composed of about one hundred free persons of color from the United States, an independent Republic composed entirely of colored persons, has sprung up as it were on that distant coast, recognized by two of the most powerful nations in the world, and standing "self-poised and erect," a monument of American benevolence, under the direction and fostering care of Divine Providence.

To all who may wish to peruse a very interesting, correct, and strikingly beautiful history of Liberia, the author cordially recommends a little book which has lately appeared, the "*New Republic*," written by an American lady, and published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society.

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 SKETCH—No. I.
 

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**GEOGRAPHY.**—That portion of the western coast of Africa which has received the appellation of Liberia, embraces a tract of country included between the parallels of 4° 20' and 7° north latitude, extending about 400 miles along the coast. All the territory which lies between these two points has been purchased from the original proprietors and rightful owners of the soil, except two or three small tracts, comprising in all about twenty-five miles of sea-coast. Negotiations will be entered into, as early as practicable, for the fair and honorable purchase of these remaining tracts; and also for that important section of country lying between the northern boundary of Liberia and the Colony of Sierra Leone. It is hoped and expected that these purchases will soon be effected; and that the whole line of the sea-coast between the British Colony and the

south-eastern boundary of "Maryland in Liberia," (about 500 miles,) will soon be under the jurisdiction and government of the Republic and the Maryland Colony.

The first tract was purchased in the early part of 1822, embracing a small extent of territory in the vicinity of Cape Mesurado. Other portions have, at different times, been purchased—the greater part within the last few years. The interior boundaries of the purchased tracts are generally not definitely prescribed. They usually extend from about ten to thirty miles from the coast.

In no instance, have the natives, from whom the land was purchased, been required to remove their residences, or to abandon their usual customs, except that of trading in slaves, and the practice of such superstitious rites or ceremonies as

NOTE.—Since the above was put in type, information has been received from Liberia of the purchase, except two small tracts of about five miles each, of all the territory above referred to, including Gallinas, which, until very lately, was one of the most noted slave-marts on the coast of Africa.

## Appearance of the Country—Water—Soil and Rivers.

tend to deprive any of their fellow beings of life. And, in all the written contracts which have been entered into between the Agents of the Colonization Society and the native chiefs, the latter have invariably obligated themselves, in behalf of the people over whom they preside, to conform to the laws and regulations of the Liberia government.

As in most other countries, similarly situated, the land in the immediate vicinity of the ocean in Liberia, is generally low; and, in some places, it is very marshy. There are some elevated spots, however; such as those on which the villages of Monrovia and Harper are located. The land generally becomes more elevated towards the interior; and, in some places, within fifty miles of the coast, it is quite mountainous.

Far as the eye can reach from the highest points of land in the vicinity of the ocean, the whole country presents the appearance of a deep, unbroken forest, with hill-top rising above hill-top towards the vast interior; the country consisting, not as is supposed by some persons, of arid plains and burning sands, but of hills and valleys, covered with the verdure of perpetual spring. The country is well watered:—many beautiful streams may be seen winding their way amidst blooming flowers and wild shrubbery; and many cooling springs of clear, sparkling water invite the weary traveler to linger and quench his thirst. In all the settlements in Liberia, good water can be procured without much difficulty; and though in the dry season, as in this country after a long dry spell in summer, some of the springs fail, for a time; yet, as good water can always be obtained by digging wells, and as many of the springs never fail, there need not be any fear about getting plenty of good water at any time in the year.

**Soil.** The soil of Liberia, like that of other countries, varies in appearance, quali-

ty, and productiveness. That of the uplands, though generally much inferior to that of the low lands, is better adapted for some articles. The upland soil usually consists of a reddish clay, more or less mixed with soft rocks and stones, containing considerable quantities of iron. That of the lowlands, in the immediate vicinity of the ocean, consists principally of sand; and it is really astonishing to perceive how well many vegetables will grow in this kind of soil, even within fifty yards of the ocean, in some places. Besides this sandy soil, there are two other varieties of lowland soil; one of which is that on the banks of the rivers, within a few miles of the sea; this consists of a loose, deep, black mould; which is peculiarly adapted to the growth of those kinds of vegetables which thrive best during the dry season. The other variety is that which is generally found extending back from the banks of the rivers, farther from the sea than the last named; this consists of a light-colored clay, more or less tempered with sand; and it is well adapted to almost every kind of vegetable which will thrive in tropical climates.

**Rivers.** There are no very large rivers in Liberia; and, although some of them are from one-fourth to three-fourths of a mile wide, for fifty miles or more from their entrance into the ocean; yet, none of them are navigable to a greater distance than twenty miles; the navigation being obstructed by rapids. The St. Paul's, the St. John's, and the Junk are the largest; and, indeed, they are the only rivers of any considerable length or width. The other principal rivers are the Cape Mount, the Mechlin, the New Cess, the Grand Cess, the Sanguin, the Sinou, and the Grand Sesters. Some of these present a bold appearance at their mouths; but they are all comparatively short; and none of them are navigable for boats, or even for canoes, more than twenty miles.