

# The Fat Memoirs



Dave Engel



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*Home Mission (1987)*

John L. Sullivan is the Fat Man.





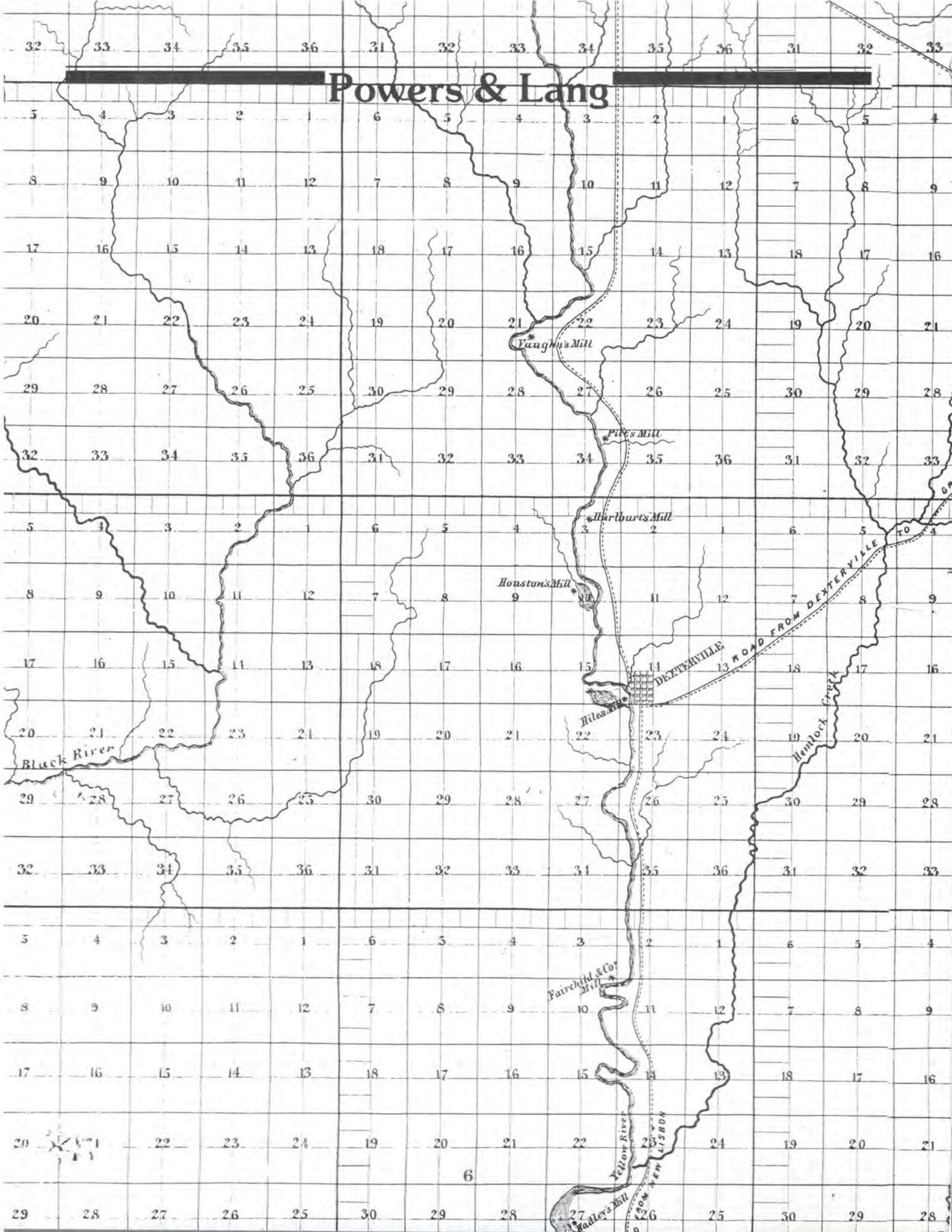
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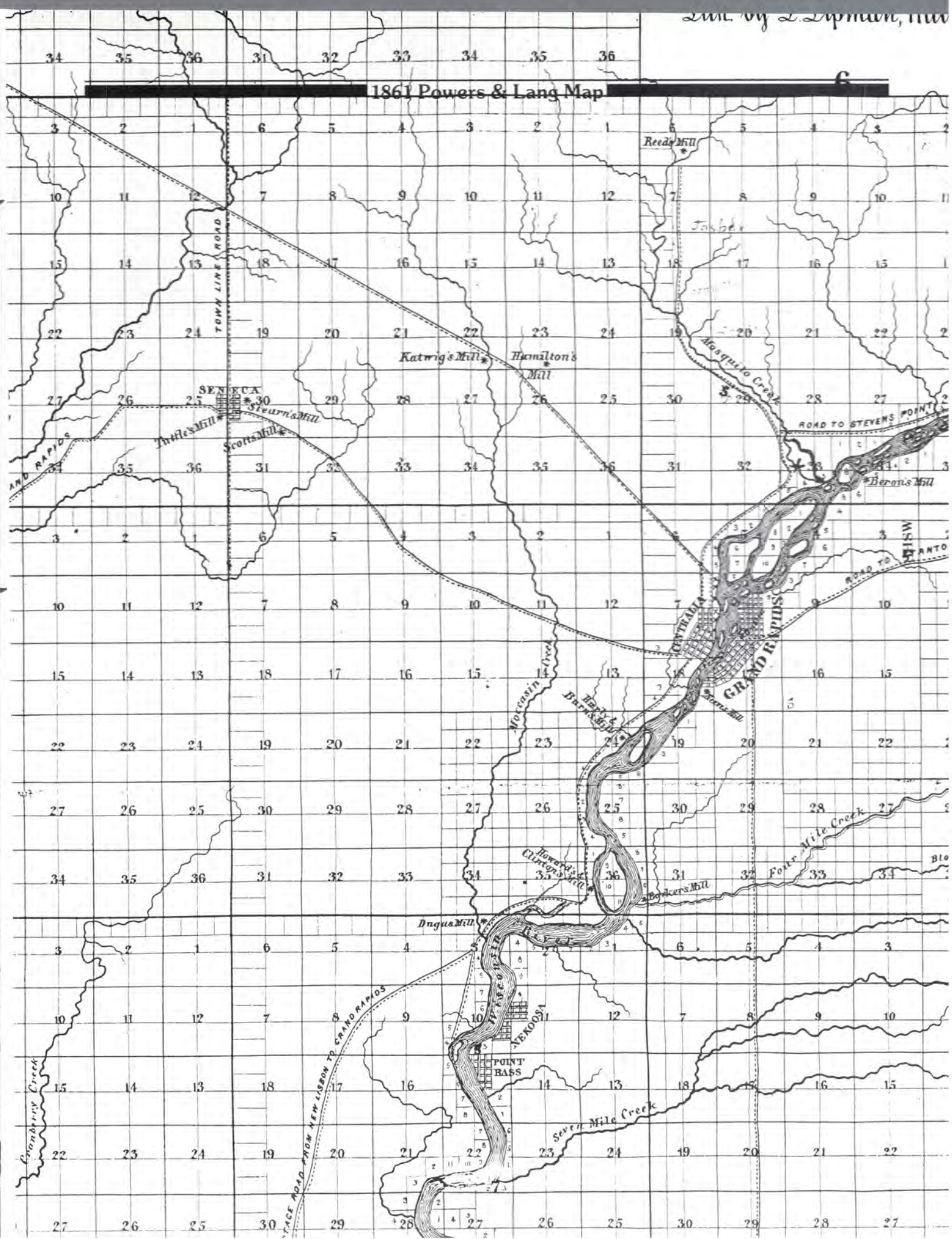
# Powers & Lang





1861 Powers & Lang Map

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# Amable Grignon

The first settler here knew what he was getting into.

An experienced French-Canadian trader whose family had intermarried with Indians and who had lived seasonally along the Wisconsin River, Amable Grignon (Ah-mah-bl Green-yo) was close to both white and Indian leaders at the turn of the 19th century.

## De Langlade connection

Family history, provided in part by descendant Anona Schmidt, 1521 Saratoga St., takes Amable's line back to Augustin de Langlade, who moved from France to Mackinac in the 1720's and began trading with the Ottawa Indians.

Augustin married Domitelle Nassawaquet, daughter of an Ottawa chief. Their son, Charles Michel de Langlade, became a first settler of Green Bay in 1745.

In the French and Indian War, de Langlade led his Indian troops against the British. During the Revolutionary War, he fought on the British side against the Americans. In each case, he chose to defend "native American" interests against interlopers.

## The Grignons

A daughter of Charles de Langlade, Louise Domitelle, b. 1759, became the second wife of Pierre Grignon, b. 1740, a French-Canadian voyageur trading around Lake Superior.

According to information provided by John Berg, a de Langlade and Grignon authority, Pierre's first wife was a Menominee with whom he had three children. Only one, Perrishe, lived to adulthood.

With his second wife, Louise, Pierre had nine children: Pierre Antoine (1777), Charles (1779), Augustine (1780), Louis (1783), Jean B. (1785), Domitelle (1787), Marguerite (1789), Hippolyte (Paul, 1790) and Amable, born in 1795, just after his father's death.

All of the boys but Jean B. were to become fur traders.

## Fur trade

The "Recollections of Antoine Grignon" in State Historical Society Proceedings 1914, suggest the cycles in the life of the fur trader.

It was customary that fur traders leave for

Indian country in September or October. In large canoes and barges, they carried hatchets, knives, ammunition (powder and lead), blankets, woolen dress-goods, calico, and trinkets: beads, ribbons, and silver ornaments. Essential were traps—and liquor. "A few kegs or barrels of rum would often get the trader more furs than any of his other goods," said Grignon.

The trader penetrated to the remote parts of the country and dispersed his trappers into the interior. At his trading quarters, he collected furs during the fall, winter and spring. When spring trapping was over, his boats loaded with fur, he would depart for the fur company's headquarters.

Even as the fur trade here waned in the late 1700s and early 1800s, competition was intense between Americans, British and French-Canadians.

## War of 1812

Since the opening of the Ohio Valley in the 1790s, according to Berg, Americans had sought to settle on Indian land. To the Indians, the British were a source of support against the Americans.

The Grignons allied with the British, according to information in the Porlier/Grignon/Lawe papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Amable served as a corporal in the Green Bay detachment. In 1817, under engagement with Duncan Graham ("Fur Trade in Wisconsin"), he traded on the St. Peter's River.

## Hudson Bay Co.

F.J. Turner, in "The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin," places Amable at Lac qui Parle, Minn., in 1818; the next year, at Lake Athabasca; and the third, "in the hyperborean regions of Great Slave Lake."

The following spring, at the Lake Winnipeg rendezvous, according to "Fur Trade in Wisconsin," "he had the fortune to please the governor of the Hudson's Bay Co. and was, for the following year (1818), sent to Athabasca."

The next year, Amable renewed his engagement and was stationed at the Great Slave Lake. While there, because of his well-known "resolution," he received orders, said "Fur Trade," to arrest traders of the North West Company.

His contract of May 1, 1819, with the Hudson Bay Co., is on file at the State Historical Society, in



which Amable, "of the parish of Green Bay, Upper Canada," agreed to serve as a clerk at the rate of 2,000 livres or shillings and the usual equipment, such as tobacco, shoes and dogs.

The following year, Amable was at Fort Wedderburn and, in 1821, at Fort Chippewyan.

In 1823, Amable returned from the north just too late to see his mother before her death on October 23. It has been said that he brought with him his wife, Marie Judith Bourassa (b. 1796), from Mackinac, her birthplace. Other information suggests that they were married in 1835.

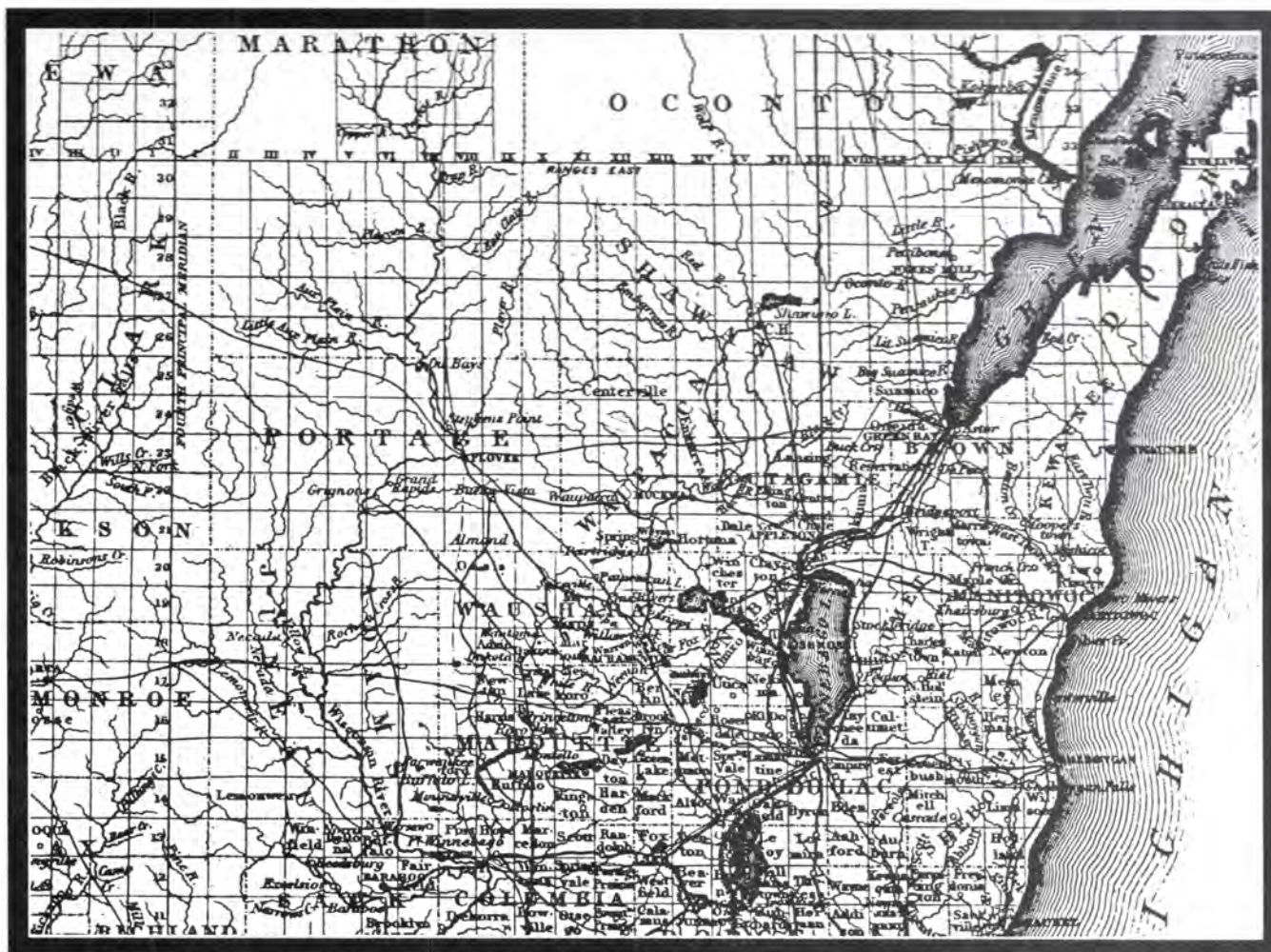
Having accumulated capital during his service with the Hudson Bay Co., Amable went into partnership with his brother Paul (b. 1790), and secured an outfit for the Wisconsin trade.

## Home to Wisconsin

According to papers in the Grignon collection, in October 1823, Amable returned to Green Bay from Canada, possibly the Red River settlement near Winnipeg. By December of that year, he had begun trading.

The next document in the Grignon papers mentioning Amable Grignon is dated May 15, 1824, from Michael Dousman, esq., Sault St. Marie, to Amable at Green Bay.

In 1828, Amable received his mail at Portage. In 1829, he was "aux du Ouisconsin marais" or at the Wisconsin marsh or, simply, "aux du Ouisconsin." Henceforth, along the upper Wisconsin, he would spend the rest of his days.



Wisconsin 1855, J.H. Colton



# Oppor Ouisconsing

During the last years of Indian dominion, members of the Grignon family were the first whites to make our area their permanent home. In 1818, Jacques Porlier and Augustin Grignon, of Green Bay, operated a trading post at Point Basse. Ten years later, Fort Winnebago was built at Portage. Amable Grignon spent some time at Portage and received mail there.

## 'Oppor Ouisconsing'

In 1831, Amable and his brother, Charles, signed a trading contract to work for the Porlier & Grignon trading company.

On March 12, Amable wrote to Porlier & Grignon from the "Oppor Ouisconsing" in a rare English-language letter. "I wish you could send me ten bushels of corn and two barrels of flour and barrels of whiskey as far as the portage for the goods I sent the Indians." The Indians, he said, were beaver and marten hunting.

According to "Commemorative Biographical Record," Amable became the first permanent white settler above Portage City on the Wisconsin River, in 1929, "when the entire country was an undeveloped wilderness." He cleared land and built a home, which later was swept away by floods.

Amable's first trading post cannot be exactly located. "Wisconsin Historical Collections XIX" places it in Adams County on Grignon's (14 Mile) Creek. John Kingston said it was six miles below Point Basse, "the only house between the point and Wisconsin Dells."

According to George Wood, Amable and his wife located at Grignon Bend, just below the bayou in Adams County on the left bank of the river. Later, said Wood, the family located on the right bank, near the mouth of the McClean slough.

Joseph Cotey placed Grignon's "farm" a short way downstream from Oshkosh's cabin on the west bank and the tavern at Roche Cri, which Cotey called "Rocky Erie Station."

While on the Wisconsin, Amable sold farm produce at Fort Winnebago, raised stock and engaged in lumbering. Amable, said Cotey, was "a Frenchman and a good man, but he did not keep Goodhue's medicine (liquor). If a man told Mr. Grignon he had no money, he would treat him as well as if he had a million, but, for fun, Mr. Grignon would say, "No money, you cauche (sleep) in the brush."

## The Grignon privilege

In the year Daniel Whitney received permission to build a mill at Nekoosa, Amable also was authorized by the Menominee chiefs to erect a mill at or near the rapids of the upper Wisconsin River. It was approved February 13, 1832, apparently with assistance from Morgan Martin.

Amable was required by his agreement to pay to the Menominee, per year for 10 years, five barrels of flour, 50 pounds of tobacco, 50 pounds of powder, 100 pounds of lead and six dozen pipes. The total value annually was \$135.

S.C. Stambaugh, U.S. Indian agent at Green Bay, wrote: "The anxiety to obtain mill privileges at this time arises out of the hope that the treaty concluded last winter (Treaty of the Cedars) will be ratified and, by the land in the vicinity being thrown into market, a great demand for lumber will be the consequence.

"Mr. Grignon is a respectable trader, located at or near the place upon which he is desirous of erecting a mill," wrote Stambaugh, "and believing the improvements he intends making will be advantageous to all parties interested." On September 19, 1836, Amable signed a bond to guarantee payment to the Menominee, a copy of which is held at the Portage County courthouse.

Within a week, he deeded to Robert Grignon, Peter B. Grignon and Morgan L. Martin an equal one-quarter share in his grant. In turn, the three promised to help erect "a good and sufficient mill." The Grignon mill was built in 1837, according to Cotey, who said it later was sold to Sam Merrill.

## Post trading

A June 16, 1836, letter from Amable also was signed by Marie Judith Bourassa. On May 5, 1837, Amable used a return address of "Portages du Plover." The pinery was getting civilized.

The first white male child, in what is now Adams County, John B. Grignon, son of Amable, was born in 1837. Other children of Amable and Marie Bourassa were Augustin, Amable, Andrew, Ignace and Angeline (Mrs. Louis Joyal).

A May 21, 1838, letter from Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jas. Whitcomb to Surveyor General A.G. Ellis referred to Grignon's grant—"at which place he was permitted to erect a saw and grist mill, and to cut and make use of the timber in the



vicinity, without designating any particular limits." Whitcomb, on November 23, 1838, complained of "certain intruders rapidly cutting and running the pine and other timber from the land in treaty of September 6, 1836."

Whitcomb urged Ellis to get on with the survey needed to begin selling land in the grant, but not to survey the adjoining Winnebago lands, "since the time of vacating them as provided in the treaty does not expire until the 15th of February next year."

In 1839, Martin wrote Ellis that the beginning of the survey two miles above Grignon's would inter-

fere with the grant, "commencing at the upper line of a former grant to Daniel Whitney and running up and along the Wisconsin River three miles, and one mile in width on each side of said river."

### In Grignon's hand

Thomas W. Sutherland wrote on July 24, 1844, to Commissioner Crawford that payments supposed to have been made by Bloomer and Chamberlain of Grand Rapids to the Menominee were not being made.

The only records were receipts from 1838 and 1839 for flour, corn and pork. Some were signed with an "X" by Amable Grignon and some by the same name, "in a tolerable handwriting," said Sutherland.

In February, 1844, David Jones, Indian agent, inspected treaty-mandated blacksmith shops, one on the upper Wisconsin. There, he found Cormier, the blacksmith, absent, the coal exposed to the weather, and a new sleigh in the shop, "which belonged to a Mr. Grignon, a resident of that county" (Wisconsin Territorial Papers).

The assistant blacksmith, Joseph Brin, told Jones that the shop had been of more convenience to the whites than to the Indians. A Mr. LaBrich told Jones that he delivered, in 1843, \$50 worth of coal to the blacksmith shop made out in the name of Amable Grignon, "who signed the receipts for Cormier as if for one hundred (100) dollars." Jones said Grignon told him he had signed to oblige Cormier and had no interest in the matter.

Jones also said that Indians had complained about trespasses and encroachments upon their lands. Accompanying destruction of timber had become more and more "immense" as the ceded lands were settled. "It seems to me that every White Man engaged in the lumbering business is a trespasser on the Indian lands," said Jones.

### A last word

Marie Bourassa continued to add her letters to Amable's. His last letter came in August 1845, but it is her missive that concludes the Amable Grignon collection. Her last letter, to Augustin Grignon from her home "du haut du Wisconsin" on November 15, 1845, spoke of pain and suffering and of herself—Marie Judith Bourassa Grignon—now "widow."

Anona Schmidt



John Baptiste Grignon, Julia La Bonte Grignon,  
Ida Grignon



# Whitney Trespass

Modern manufacturing in Juneau and Wood counties began in the winter of 1827-28, when Daniel Whitney of Green Bay got permission from the Winnebago to make shingles on the upper Wisconsin River. In this venture, Whitney employed 22 Stockbridge Indians, under the supervision of a white man apparently named Pliny Sabins. He also hired Ebenezer Childs to take the group up the Wisconsin and to supply them with provisions.

Childs' "Recollections" in Wisconsin Historical Collections, Vol. IV, describe in a personal fashion how the first industrial interlopers clashed with representatives of the U.S. government.

In addition to getting permission from the Winnebago to make shingles, Whitney secured a license from the War Department, dated January 31, 1829, to reside on the upper Wisconsin and trade with the Indians. He did not have permission from the Menominee, or other tribes who also had claim to much of the Wisconsin River valley.

Childs escorted the 22 Stockbridges and Sabins to the mouth of the Yellow River and left them while he returned to Green Bay. When he returned from Green Bay to Fort Winnebago at the Fox-Wisconsin portage, he was told by commanding officer David Twiggs to go no further.

Twiggs, described as a "portly, pompous man" by Henry Merrell, and three companies of infantry had been sent to the portage to erect Fort Winnebago. Among the force was a lieutenant named Jefferson Davis, who went up the Yellow River to cut pine logs to be used in the fort.

Twiggs said John Marsh, the Indian agent from Prairie du Chien, was expected to arrive that day. Marsh intended to evict Whitney's shinglemakers. If Marsh needed help ending the trespass upon Indian land, said Twiggs, he and his soldiers would provide it. Twiggs told Childs not to venture up river, where the men were making shingles. A defiant Childs replied that all the Indian agents and soldiers combined could not prevent him from fulfilling his contracts.

Childs said the Indian agent had heard false representations, that he, Childs, had delivered provisions to the Winnebagoes for Whitney's men, and that the Winnebagoes were satisfied to allow Whitney to make as many shingles as he pleased.

Twiggs, said Childs, flew into a rage and told him he would be sorry for his course.

When Childs arrived at the shingle camp, he found that about 200,000 shingles had been made. Childs delivered the provisions he had brought and was about to leave, "when a Frenchman came on a clean jump." The "Frenchman" warned Childs that soldiers were at Grignon's trading post, "a short distance below," and that Mr. Grignon had sent him to warn Childs to escape.

Childs took his own team to Grignon's, where he confronted the agent, one officer and 12 soldiers, and dared them to take him in. The agent said he would take "all he should find committing trespass on the camp."

Childs returned to the shingle camp with the military unit. Immediately, he began shaving shingles, hoping to be arrested, he said. At the shanty, Childs told the overseer of shingle-making that he, personally, would not surrender alive, but the overseer was free to make his own choice. The overseer (Sabins) consulted with his men (the Stockbridges) and decided to surrender.

Childs then called on "my eight stout Frenchmen" to take charge of the shanty and property belonging to Whitney. As a consequence, they spread their blankets and turned in for the night.

The next morning, Childs refused to allow the overseer, his men or the soldiers to eat breakfast but was persuaded to sell pork, flour and corn to them, although at a deliberately exorbitant rate. After dining, Childs collected the tools and provisions from the camp and took them down to Grignon's, where he stored them.

Childs was warned that Major Twiggs was in a "high rage," swearing that if Childs came near the fort, he would have him arrested, put in



irons and sent to Prairie du Chien for trespass on Indian lands. Childs, "not in the habit of dodging any mortal man," started for the fort. His teamsters, presumably the eight stout Frenchmen, who "were averse to it," followed anyway. At the fort, Childs continued to taunt Twiggs and other officers, according to his account.

Not long thereafter, Twiggs sent soldiers up the Wisconsin to retrieve a portion of Whitney's shingles. They burned the rest. According to Childs, Whitney lost not less than \$1,000 in the shingle operation through Twiggs' malice.

Rather than retire from the scene, Whitney, in 1831, as recorded in a 1832 bond agreement, was granted permission by Chief Oshkosh and the Menominee tribe on August 16 to "erect mills and occupy a quantity of land at or near the rapids of the upper Wisconsin River."

He also had received a permit from the War Department on September 8. An October 25,

1831, letter to Lewis Cass, Secretary of War, from S.C. Stambaugh, Indian agent at Green Bay, said: "The anxiety to obtain mill privileges at this time arises out of the hope that the treaty concluded last winter will be ratified; and, by the land in the vicinity being thrown into market, a great demand for lumber will be the consequence . . . In my opinion, these improvements are all important to the prosperity of the country. They will be advantageous to the Indians and productive of good to the government by making the lands in the neighborhood valuable."

The agreement required Whitney to saw, at a reasonable cost, all the lumber needed "for the proper use of the Menominee Nation, or the government of the United States." He also promised to deliver annually to the Menominee chiefs at the mill site, each September for 10 years, the following, estimated at trader's prices to have a total value of \$67.50 per year: Fifty pounds of powder, worth \$20; 100 pounds of shot, \$20; 200 flints, \$1; 50 pounds of tobacco, \$12.50; 100 pipes, \$2; and 12 bushels of corn, \$13.

Added to the agreement was that Whitney would "yield quiet possession," when required by an authorized officer of the government.

In 1831-32, assisted by his nephew, David Whitney, and A.B. Sampson, Whitney built the first permanent factory on the upper Wisconsin—a sawmill on the east bank, across from what is Nekoosa today.

For his part, Twiggs, then a brigadier general, surrendered his army, in 1861, to the Confederate cause, which happened to be presided over by his former subordinate, Lieutenant Davis. Twiggs consequently was dismissed from the Army.

Among his other activities, Childs transported eight "loads" of cranberries from the crop of 1827, to Galena, Ill., to be exchanged for provisions. He not only had gotten the wood-products industry off on the wrong foot; Childs also had seen the area's cranberry business into print.

SWCHC



Daniel Whitney



## Fur Trader's Tale

Possibly the first items of modern commerce on the upper Wisconsin River were fur pelts traded by Indians to British, French-Canadian and American traders for export east. An 1887 narrative by Louis Porlier, in "Wisconsin Historical Collections XV," documents the waning days of that industry at "Point Boss." It also relates the last days of Indian dominion in the central Wisconsin pinery.

"Point Boss," as named by Porlier, may be the site of the Wakely Inn, commonly known as Point Basse, or it may be downstream, where a Grignon trading post has been mapped.

Three years after his 1815 birth at Green Bay, relates Porlier, his father, Jacques Porlier, and Augustin Grignon built their principal trading post on the upper end of Lake Butte des Morts. Porlier and Grignon also maintained branch trading posts at Grand Kackalin (Kaukauna) on the lower Fox River and "Point Boss" on the Wisconsin.

Grignon lived at Grand Kackalin, and Porlier, at Green Bay. Business at the trading posts was conducted by clerks, who were chiefly members of the Grignon and Porlier families. "Some of the firm visited the establishments each spring or fall," said Porlier. In 1833, Louis was sent to Point Boss with Augustin Grignon's younger brother (and brother-in-law to Porlier after 1840), Amable Grignon. At Point Boss since 1829 was James Knaggs, a Potawatomi half-breed who would, in 1835, purchase a ferry and tavern business at Algoma from Robert Grignon.

In the 1830s, according to Porlier, "the trading business was commencing to be far from profitable." The impression that the old fur traders "waxed rich" was erroneous, said Porlier. Porlier described a universal scheme of credit among the early traders, who depended on the good will of the Indians for their tenure on the land.

After loading down his squaw with blankets, provisions and trinkets obtained from the trader, the Indian almost invariably would say, "No money now; no furs. I pay you when hunt is over." Turning on his heel, the Indian would march through the door.

Coming back in a few moments, he would assume a sorrowful face, said Porlier. "How can I pay you when I have no gun, no traps, no kettle. And my son and my brother and my father have no gun or traps. So lend me some."

The demands generally were obeyed.

However, the following winter, the Indian might die or, for some other reason, never come to see the trader again. Even if he lived, some of the articles lent would be lost and some returned in poor condition.

Transportation problems also caused many losses from leakage, damage to craft going over the rapids, mutiny of the Indian oar-and pole-men, and frequent strikes for higher pay, whenever it was known that the trader was over-anxious to complete the mission.

As transportation improved, said Porlier, the gain was more than counter-acted by excessive competition on every side.



In the autumn of 1832, Porlier and Amable Grignon were on their way to Point Boss. Near Fort Winnebago (Portage), they met Robert Grignon coming down the Fox in a canoe, still weak from wounds recently acquired in the Black Hawk War.

Robert told Porlier that he had been convalescing at Fort Winnebago. On August 25, several miles from the fort, Robert saw Black Hawk, another Indian leader, "the Prophet," engaged in conversation. Robert arose and startled the Indians, who recognized and greeted him.

Black Hawk told Robert of his repeated defeats, his constant flight, his determination to surrender himself, and his desire to have Grignon conduct him to a U.S. agent. "I am hunted down like a deer by dogs. The Winnebagoes have abandoned my cause. The forests are teeming with spies of every sort, who seek my body, dead or alive, for base money."

In order to avoid assassination, the Indian said, "Take me around privately, and Black Hawk will ever remember Grignon."

Grignon took the entire party through a private entrance to the fort and handed Black Hawk over to the American agent. Four years later, in 1836, said Porlier, the U.S. government granted the Menominee the right to hunt upon such lands as were not pre-empted and to fish upon the larger streams and lakes, until the tribe had selected a reservation and was formally removed to it by the United States.

By 1848, the Menominee had made no efforts to seek a reservation, and the

government, considering the existence of roving bands of Indians a handicap to civilization, proposed in another treaty that they make a selection or be removed out of state. The tribe still would not consent.

Morgan L. Martin, scribe to Commissioner Medill, went to Augustin Grignon's tent and asked him to advise the chiefs to make a treaty. If they failed, the president would remove them without ceremony, and they would forfeit all right to a permanent home. Grignon summoned Porlier and asked him to state the case to Oshkosh and the other chiefs.

Porlier held a long council in the Indian camp. One chief told him that Pontiac had been right in his uprising of 1763. The whites rapidly were crowding the Indians off the long bench on which the whites had first only asked a resting corner. "The American never comes unless he wants something! Without a want, he never takes us by the hand," concluded the speaker, and a wild burst of enthusiasm followed.

The next day, "concluding discretion was the better part of valor," the Menominee chiefs signed the treaty in accordance with governmental desires and soon were removed to the Shawano reservation. It was the last blow to the trading business of the region, said Porlier. And none too early, "for the disasters of many years had now quite impoverished those engaged in it, but the pursuit they could not readily abandon, for the associations of a lifetime had wedded them to its practice."



# Treaty of Cedar Point

What is now named Wood County once "belonged" to itself. After hundreds of millions of years, people came to live on the land that owned itself—tribes called Chippewa, Winnebago and Menominee. These inhabitants continued to believe that the land could be used by all and fought over from time to time but could not be owned by any person.

Others came who were accustomed to call land their own. These were tribes of what had been seen by the Romans as barbarian enemies of civilization—tribes called English, German and French. Recently, they had come to the North American continent in search of better social and economic opportunity.

The U.S. War Department had been issuing permits to log on Indian lands, although the failure to remove the Indians continued to impede settlement. A few pinery developers, such as Daniel Whitney, were willing to negotiate on their own with Indian leaders to obtain land or rights to the resources thereon.

In 1825, an intertribal council was held at Prairie du Chien. The purpose was to get Indians to agree on their boundaries as a preliminary to negotiations with the specific tribes. This occasion served as a preliminary to later cession of land.

After the Black Hawk War of 1832, according to Robert Fries in the "Wisconsin Magazine of History," September 1942, the government was "stung into action" and "began to negotiate a series of treaties that left the Indians, in less than 20 years, with only a few square miles of 'reservation' area in Wisconsin."

Among these treaties was one signed September 3, 1836, at Cedar Point on the Fox River, near Green Bay. Representing the United States was Henry Dodge, governor of the territory and Indian commissioner.

Representing Indian interests were chiefs and head men of the Menominee nation. On February 15, 1837, the treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate.

The Menominee agreed to "cede," or give up, to the United States two tracts of land described in a detailed and geographic manner. One tract included all of the territory between Green Bay and the Fox and Wolf rivers on the south and northeast, from the Wolf to the upper forks of the Menominee River, Escanaba River and Bay de Noquet. This tract was estimated in the treaty at 4 million acres and included a part of present Michigan.

In a further cession, the Menominee nation, in the persons of the signers, agreed to relinquish to the United States all land: "Beginning at a point upon said Wisconsin River, two miles above the grant or privilege heretofore granted by said nation and the United States, to Amable Grignon; thence running up and along said river 48 miles in a direct line; and being three miles in width on each side of said river; this tract to contain eight townships or 184,320 acres of land."

In 1831, Grignon had been granted a "privilege" at what was later to become Port Edwards. In 1836, prior to the treaty, he received permission to build a mill there.

For the 4,184,320 acres in-

cluded in the two parcels of land, the United States agreed to pay the Menominee \$20,000 per year for 20 years, to total \$400,000.

The United States also agreed to supply each year for 20 years the following:

- \$3,000 worth of provisions
- 2,000 pounds of tobacco
- 30 barrels of salt
- \$500 per year for the purchase of farming utensils, cattle or farming tools, "to be expended under the direction of the superintendent or agent."
- two blacksmiths and shops to be at such places as designated by the superintendent or agent
- payment of debts of the Menominee Indians amounting to \$99,710.50
- \$80,000, to be divided among all residents of mixed blood that the chiefs designated, under direction of a commissioner to be appointed by the president.

The Treaty of Cedar Point also released the United States from treaties made in 1831 and 1832, "as requires the payment of farmers, blacksmiths, millers, &c."

The Menominee relinquished their right to appropriations for education, reservation improvements, cattle, farming utensils and other articles provided for in the previous treaties.

To compensate for the losses caused by revocation, the United States agreed to allow the Indians \$76,000, which would be invested in "some safe stock" until such time as the president decided the income interest could be applied to some useful purpose.

Annuities, according to the



schedule, would be paid in June or July.

The Menominee agreed to depart from ceded lands within a year after ratification of the treaty by the President and Senate of the United States.

According to "The History of the Territory of Wisconsin," the total amount agreed to be paid by the United States would amount to about \$800,000. A March 3, 1837, act of Congress carried the treaty into effect with an initial appropriation of \$238,540.

On hand the day in 1836 the treaty was signed were witnesses Henry Blair, secretary to the commissioner; George Boyd, U.S.

Indian agent; and others. Charles Grignon served as sworn interpreter. Also on hand were L. Grignon and "Agent" Grignon.

For the white man, the treaty of Cedar Point was signed by "H. Dodge."

Making their "X" marks were 24 Menominee:

Osh-kosh.

A-Yamma-taw. Ko-ma-ni-kin.

Wain-e-saut. Kee-sis. Carron-Glaude.

Say-ga-toke. Shee-o-ga-tay. Wah-pee-min. Isk-ki-ninew.

Ko-ma-ni-kee-no-shah. Wah-bee-ne-mickee. Shee-pan-ago. Maw-baw-so. Chin-nay-pay-mawly.

Chee-chee-go-naw-way. Sho-

neon. Et-chee-kee. Pee-a-tum.

Pay-maw-ba-may. Ah-kah-mute. Pah-mun-a-kut.

Chee-kah-ma-ke-shir.

Wah-kee-che-un.

These were the names of those who sold what they did not believe was theirs to sell to those who believed it was their manifest destiny to buy whatever could be bought. "Done at Cedar Point, in said territory of Wisconsin, this third day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six, and in the year of the Independence of the United States the sixty-first."

## Winnebago Cession

It was the Black Hawk War that inadvertently advertised Indian lands of the upper Wisconsin. After 1832, wrote Pierce in Wisconsin Historical Proceedings, 1910, "covetous eyes" were turned to the upper Mississippi region, "and the government was importuned to extinguish the Indian title."

An 1832 treaty gave up land in the southern part of the state. It also required the Winnebago to move west of the Mississippi, although they refused to be placed there between hostile Sioux and Sac/Fox lands. Instead, many moved north of the Wisconsin River.

In the autumn of 1836, chiefs of the Winnebago were called together at Portage, and Gen. Henry Dodge, governor of the new Territory and general Indian agent, entered into

negotiations for a sale of their lands north of the Wisconsin River. The Winnebago refused to sell, alleging that this was their home, and that they had no more land that they wished to sell to the whites.

Smallpox in 1834 and ensuing years killed about a quarter of the Winnebago. An 1837 letter to Dodge from Col. Taylor, acting Indian agent (Stevens Point Documents), described the Winnebago as "scourged by smallpox" and starving.

A May 27 letter to Dodge from the Prairie du Chien agency said that with a little exertion from the government, the Winnebago might be induced to migrate west of the Mississippi during the next summer. If provisions were offered, Dodge said, the Winnebago would voluntarily

emigrate. "From the disappearance of ducks and geese in the spring until deer get fat, and corn and beans get so as to be eat;—the Winnebagoes are now in this scarce stage, with no powder or lead and no store of corn or potatoes from last year, and are almost literally starving. A few fish and roots in the prairies are their only food."

Dodge received a letter from John McFarlane, who would later attend the Winnebago treaty signing. "The Indians were then all willing to go to Washington City but, a short time after my arrival, an Englishman who called himself Massingbird came here whose object, he said, was a tour of curiosity through the Western County.

"This man soon began to make presents of goods and money to the



Indians and, in a few days, after a number of the Indians began to express great dissatisfaction toward the president of the United States and said they would not go to Washington, because they were told by their friends the president wished them to go to Washington that he might cheat them out of their lands." McFarlane said he heard Massingbird tell the Indians that the Americans gave them whiskey to make them drunk, so that they could cheat them out of their land, and that they soon would have no place to hunt. McFarlane told Massingbird, that if he heard any more such talk, he would have him arrested.

Dodge wrote to Carey A. Harris, commissioner of Indian Affairs, that Massingbird had given presents to Winnisheka, one of the principal chiefs, whose son "is one of the deputation that visits Washington City." Massingbird, said Dodge, had told Winnisheka that the British and French never purchased land from the Indians; only the Americans did—that it was the American's

intention to drive the Indians to the Rocky Mountains.

Dodge wrote that Massingbird advised the Indians not to go to Washington on the grounds that the government's objective was to take advantage of them, and that the Americans never would comply with the treaty. The Winnebago never had been friendly to the U.S. government, said Dodge, "and there are no Indians on this frontier who would more readily listen to bad advice.

"I discovered a great reluctance on the part of these Indians to visit Washington. Their traders have the most unbounded influence over them, and it required active exertions on my part, aided by the agent, to start them."

On November 7, Dodge wrote to Harris that military force would be used, if needed, to remove intruders from the Indian country.

Dodge that year, had invited the Winnebago to send a delegation to visit their Great Father in Washington, wrote Henry Merrell, Fort Crawford postmaster (Wisconsin

Historical Collections VII). Suspecting a plot to gain their land, they asked, "What for—to make a treaty?"

Dodge evaded the point, according to Merrell, suggesting they get acquainted with their Great Father. He also promised them presents.

After much persuasion, in the summer of 1837, a band of 20 Winnebago, including chiefs Yellow Thunder, Kar-i-mo-nee, Big Boat Decora and sons of sons of chiefs, was induced to go to Washington. They were conducted by Thomas A. Boyd, sub-agent at Fort Winnebago, and traders Joseph Moore, Joseph Brisbois and Satterlee Clark. Nicolas Boilvin, Antoine Grignon and Jean Roy went along as interpreters.

As soon as they got to Washington, the Winnebago were beset to hold a treaty and cede their lands to the government. The chiefs at first declined to make a treaty, saying that they were not authorized by their tribe to do so and that most of their chiefs were at home. Besides the lack of tribal leaders, the signing party only included two of the Bear



Latter-Day Winnebago in ceremonial dress.



Clan, normally entrusted with land affairs.

"Every influence was brought to bear upon them," wrote Merrell, "and they began to get uneasy lest winter should set in, and prevent their returning home. They were without means to defray their expenses back; and those managing Indian matters at Washington kept them there and pressed them to enter into a treaty."

On November 1, the Winnebago yielded to the pressure and signed a treaty conveying away all their lands east of the Mississippi for about \$1,500,000 to be paid in annuities.

The Winnebago were to move from Wisconsin within eight months, although Merrell states the signers thought the agreement was for eight years—enough time to renegotiate a proper treaty.

As each went forward to attach his mark, he repeated that he understood they would be allowed to remain "eight years." "And thus, the poor Red Men were deceived and outwitted by those who ought to have been their wards and protec-

tors," said Merrell.

A son of a prominent chief, involved in the delegation, dared not visit his father for a long time, said Merrell, who maintained that the whole nation felt outraged at being forced to leave their native homes.

Yellow Thunder declared he would never go, that he would leave his bones in Wisconsin. When he was invited, with young Black Wolf, into Fort Winnebago, on pretense of holding a council, the gates were closed on them, and they were conveyed by U.S. troops beyond the Mississippi. But Yellow Thunder, it is said, got back to his native land before the soldiers returned. And that was the way it went with the Winnebago.

"The fraudulent treaty of November first, 1837, caused the government a vast deal of trouble and expense; and very naturally engendered the most embittered feelings and recollections on the part of the Winnebagoes.

"Is it any wonder that we have Indian wars when they are so

treated?" said Merrell.

Frederick Marryat, in Wisconsin Historical Collection XIV, said:

"The American government have disposed of all the land on the banks of this (Fox) river and the lake Winnebago, and, consequently, it is well settled; but the Winnebago territory in Wisconsin, lately purchased of the Winnebago Indians, and comprising all the prairie land and rich mineral country from Galena to Mineral Point, is not yet offered for sale. When it is, it will be eagerly purchased; and the American Government, as it only paid the Indians at the rate of one cent and a fraction per acre, will make an enormous profit by the speculation.

"Well may the Indians be said, like Esau, to part with their birthright for a mess of pottage; but, in truth, they are compelled to sell," said Marryat, "the purchase-money being a mere subterfuge, by which it may appear as if their lands were not wrested from them, although, in fact, it is."



In the 20th century, Winnebago such as these worked for white cranberry growers on land they once "owned."



# Usufructuary Rights

## 1850

**In treaties signed before 1850, Indian tribes were induced to sign away land once regarded at least in part as community property.**  
(State Historical Society of Wisconsin)



When Martin Van Buren assumed the presidency in 1837, he interpreted the Indian colonization plan. "The decrease in numbers of the tribes within the limits of the States and Territories has been most rapid," said Van Buren, as quoted in H.R. Schoolcraft's "History of the Indian Tribes of the United States."

"If they be removed, they can be protected from those associations and evil practices which exert so pernicious and destructive an influence over their destiny. They can be induced to labor and to acquire property, and its acquisition will inspire them with a feeling of independence. Their minds can be cultivated, and they can be taught the value of salutary and uniform laws, and be made sensible of the blessings of free government, and capable of enjoying its advantages." Van Buren also might have noted that signing of treaties could provide another advantage: a natural death—rather than one at the hands of a soldier or land-hungry immigrant.

The 1983 decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals regarding the usufructuary rights of the Lac Courte Oreilles band of Chippewa contains a history of the treaty of 1837, in which the Chippewa ceded their land in Wisconsin.

During the first half of the 19th century, the policy of the federal government was to buy Indian

lands where white settlement was anticipated and to provide for removal of the Indians to lands farther west. This is called the "removal policy."

In 1837, Wisconsin Territorial Gov. Henry Dodge was authorized to negotiate a treaty with the Chippewa for the purchase of land in northern Wisconsin. On March 3, Congress appropriated \$10,000 for "holding treaties with the various tribes of Indians east of the Mississippi River, for the cession of lands held by them . . . and for their removal west of the Mississippi."

On May 13, 1837, the Office of Indian Affairs wrote Treaty Commissioner Dodge, indicating the land was valuable for pine timber and that acquisition by the United States would open the territory for white settlement.

A treaty council was held. According to notes of Verplanck Van Antwerp, secretary, Dodge told the chiefs in July that the government wanted to buy a portion of their land that was barren of game and not suited for agriculture. Dodge described the land as "abound(ing) in pine timber, for which their Great Father, the president of the United States, wished to buy it from them for the use of his white children."

The Indians responded, according to the court finding, that they wanted to continue their gathering and hunting activities on the lands, wished annuities for 60 years, after which their grand-



children could negotiate for themselves, and sought provisions for the half-breeds and traders.

Dodge pointed out the Great Father did not buy land for a term of years, but he would grant the Indians "free use of the rivers, and the privilege of hunting upon the lands you are to sell to the United States during his pleasure."

The following day, the Indians repeated that they wished to reserve the privilege of using land for gathering, hunting and fishing. They said they could not live if deprived of these means of sustenance. Dodge replied that he would make known to the Great Father the request to make sugar, and hunt and fish on the lands. "It will probably be many years before your Great Father will want all these lands for the use of his white children," said Dodge.

The "Treaty with the Chippewa, 1837," concluded at the confluence of the St. Peter's and Mississippi rivers, and reproduced in Charles J. Kappler's "Indian Treaties, 1778-1883," embodies many of the points discussed by Dodge and the Chippewa chiefs.

The treaty was signed by Chippewa from Leech Lake, Full Lake and Swan River, the St. Croix River, Lake Courteville, Lac de Flambeau, La Pointe, Mille Lac, Sandy Lake, Snake River, Fond du Lac (on Lake Superior) and Red Cedar Lake.

Among the whites present were Van Antwerp, H.L. Dousman, S.C. Stambaugh, and Jean Baptiste Dubay, interpreter.

Article 1: The Chippewa cede more than half of their land from present Wood County northwest to the Mississippi River, not including a strip along Lake Superior and what now is the northern boundary of Wisconsin.

Article 2: The United States agree to pay annually for 20 years \$9,500 cash, \$19,000 worth of goods, \$3,000 for blacksmith shops, \$1,000 for farm supplies, \$2,000 in provisions and \$500 in tobacco.

Article 3: The United States agree to pay \$100,000 to the half-breeds of the Chippewa.

Article 4: The United States agree to pay \$70,000 worth of claims against the Chippewa, to their creditors.

Article 6: The treaty shall be obligatory from and after its ratification by the president and Senate of the United States.

It is Article 5 that continues to inflame contemporary controversy, stating that:

"The privilege of hunting, fishing and gathering the wild rice upon the lands, the rivers and the lakes included in the territory ceded, is guaranteed to the Indians during the pleasure of the president of the United States."



## 1977

**The federal government continues to recognize residual rights of Indian tribes to land in Wisconsin.**

(State Historical Society of Wisconsin)



## Indian Scare

The letter to Wisconsin's "Govoner Solimon" dated Aug. 16, 1862 brought ominous warnings. "Since the Rebellion broke out or at least for the last six months the Indians has been verry troublasome. They consist of portions of the tribes of the Winebagoes & Chipways & Manominies & a few Potwatimies & I think about 800 in all."

"The chiefs of the several bands are a making their continual threats that as soon as the men is all gone to kill the women and children and take posession of their hunting grounds again.

"When they find the man of the house gone they invariably scare the woman and children out of anything that they have in the shape of provisions and clothing," said the letter. "Last Thursday, five Indians went into a poor woman's house and took all the provisions that she had for herself & five small children.

"This I am a knowing for I was at the house shortly after. The Indians say that goverment cheated them out of their lands and they will have it back.

"The Winibagoes and Chipways Indians has allways been a fiting among themselves untill this wicked Rebellion broke out and since then the tribes have settled all difficulties and say that they are bound to drive the Whites off and take prosession of these hunting grounds."

"I have been called on by the settlers to right to you for the last 2 months concerning the matter & git your statement what to do . . . hoping that your honor will at the earliest moment do something fer us to rid this portion of the state of those Indians.

"Respectafully yours . . . Geo Hiles."

This letter and others quoted here were received by Gov. Edward Salomon, a Re-

publican who served 1862-64. Copies are in the possession of the Area Research Center, Eau Claire and the State Historical Society, Madison.

The fears of Geo. Hiles & Co. were not totally without substantiation. The War Between the States had depleted the stock of local sharpshooters at a time when the Sioux "Indian Wars" resulted, from August to December, 1862, in the deaths of an estimated 450-800 Minnesota settlers. The result was panic in the pinery.

A short petition from Frenchtown, township of Centralia, Aug. 26, indicated that the locals "do hereby agree to form ourselves into an independant military company for mutual defence." Signers included John Edwards Jr., A. Lavene, A. Dennie, M. Van Bunker, E. Sampson, Levi Ripley and Ham Canning. Also on Aug. 26, a petition was sent from the "County of Wood" wanting to organize a military company and containing such names as Dutruit, St. Amour, Lamadeline, Juneau, Lefebvre, S. Bensley, John Edwards, Patrick Hurley, Chartier, Palmetir, Kipp and others.

Another letter was written on Aug. 27, 1862, to "Hon. Edward Salomon, Gov. of Wisconsin." Citizens of Tomah were concerned that "The Indians in this section are Winnebagoes and Menomonees and lately they have been concentrating themselves about ten miles north of this place in an entirely unsettled region. They appear to be gathering in the stragglers from Portage, Reedsburgh, Mauston &c and have now formed a camp of unusual size."

Rumors of a treaty among the Winnebago, Menominee, Chippewa and Sioux made some believe a general uprising had been organized. At the same time, came



offers by representatives of "mixed bloods" to join against the Sioux. Other proposals included banding the Chippewa and Winnebago against their traditional enemies.

A petition was sent to Gov. "Saloman" on Aug. 29, from Marathon County, stating, "That recent demonstrations by Indians residing near the village of Wausau . . . render it of vital importance . . . that immediate and energetic actions be taken to defend ourselves against the blood-thirsty savages."

Even the hitherto friendly Chippewa had, according to the petition, during the past summer been guilty of "outrages." Insulting white women and entering houses and demanding food and clothing were among the crimes "all pointing to an embolden spirit which at anytime is liable to burst forth in a flame of indiscriminate slaughter of men women and children." The Wausau group said large bands of Indians numbering from a score to 2,000 seemed to be converging on Wausau. What's more, the group seemed to be made up of armed warriors traveling without wives and children. Arms and ammunition were requested by the petitioners, for the defense "of our wives, our children, friends and homes against the savages."

From Waupaca on Aug. 27 came a report that bodies of Indians, large "enough to cause alarm in view of the Minnesota troubles," had been seen. The Waupaca men wanted to organize into a military company and to commission officers.

At the same time, Salomon received letters from places as far removed as Winnebago and Bayfield, remarking that the Indians appeared peaceful in those places. One correspondent suggested the main

problem was the whites who sold whiskey to the Indians.

H. Crocker of the La Crosse & Milwaukee Rail Road wrote on Sept. 5 that there had been two Indian scares in a year "both in the most settled part of our Agricultural population."

"There are plenty of men who for mischief or fun would be disposed to get up an excitement," said Crocker, who believed the scares had been the work of "evil and designing men." Overly excited by a small number of Indians, men were coming into town armed with pitchforks, Crocker said. It had been remarked that some wouldn't be surprised to see certain parties dressed as Indians deliberately frightening "disloyal" citizens. "I suggest this to show how many ways and motives there are to keep up this Indian excitement. Crocker concluded.

A Sept. 23 letter from James S. Ritchie from Superior was also skeptical of the Indian menace. Ritchie denounced his fellow Superians as cowards who intended to abandon the town and huddle into a warehouse on an island. "I told them one white man could whip 10 Indians," said Ritchie, remarking that words were wasted "on these cowardly old women." The letter included an ad for French Female pills.

The story was similar across the state, as women and children, protected by such males as were available, hid in the most commodious and substantial buildings. After a while, it became evident that there would be no attack and the brave pioneers emerged from their hiding places. Any red that might have colored the normally pale faces was not apparent under a generous dusting of grist-mill flour.



## Kingston's Trip

In 1837, the year Robert Wakely arrived from New York, John T. Kingston packed an Indian pony at Racine and ventured north to explore the Wisconsin River valley. His memories of that trip and other historical material are found in Wisconsin Historical Collections VIII.

Former Indian land along the Lemonweir River was becoming available, and fortunes could be made. If the pine woods were what they were cracked up to be, Kingston planned to go into the lumber business.

At "Four Lakes," the future site of Madison, Kingston found Mr. Peck and Col. A.A. Bird putting up the frame of a house for a hotel. Lumber for the new state capitol lay on the ground. Bird gave Kingston directions to Rowan's trading post near what was to be Poynette.

After a night at Rowan's, Kingston followed the military road to Fort Winnebago at Portage and stayed at the Indian agency house, then used as a tavern by an Italian named Ubaldine and his Irish wife.

From Fort Winnebago, Kingston continued without the pony. He passed the trading post of Silas Walsworth before arriving at "Point Bausse" trail. After 15 miles, Kingston found a cluster of deserted bark wigwams on land owned by Jared Walsworth.

He continued on the Point Bausse trail across Dell Prairie to the foot of the Big Dells, where he found ice "running in the river and the crossing impracticable." Unable to continue, Kingston returned to Fort Winnebago. When he set out again a week later, Mrs. Ubaldine handed him a bottle of "medicine," remarking: "If you get frost bited, try this. It came from Ould Ireland."

The first night out, Kingston camped near Dell Prairie. The next morning, he started out

in cold weather and snow two feet deep. "Proceeding a few rods, we noticed a singular mound of snow a short distance out of our direct course. Examined it and found a one-horse sleigh left a few days before by Robert Bloomer, on his way to the Grand Rapids." Kingston said the sleigh contained a couple of smoked hams, bread, crackers and cheese. "Made a note of it as a good place to obtain a supply of provisions on our return, if needed."

At the edge of the prairie, a cold, wet wind convinced Kingston to try the remedy in the bottle. "After mature consultation and reflection, we concluded to try an inward application, and I must say the result was equal to our highest expectations."

This time, Kingston was able to cross the river below Big Dells. On the fourth day, Kingston reached the Lemonweir, camping at Provonsal's trading post, two or three miles above the river's mouth. The fifth and sixth days, Kingston walked up the Lemonweir on the ice, "broke through two or three times, went ashore, built fires and dried our clothes, and then continued on."

The morning of the seventh day, he and his companion consumed a breakfast of two crackers each—on the present site of New Lisbon. Returning, Kingston said, "we tightened our belts two or three times a day, dreamed at night of the good time coming, examined our depot of supplies in the sleigh, but found that some 'good Indian' had been there before us."

Kingston returned to Fort Winnebago on December 31, "weaker but not much wiser . . . only learning that our extensive pine forest was a myth, and that our lumber speculation was a failure." On the west side of the Wisconsin River, Kingston had seen no signs of the white man, except abandoned trading posts.



and no signs of Indians, except canoes covered up on the bend of the river.

Kingston said that, in 1850, the steamboat "Enterprise," under Capt. Gilbert, had come as high up the river as Point Bausse. "The same boat, afterwards, made two or three trips to the same point," he said.

For several years, said Kingston, before the railroad reached Kilbourn City (Wisconsin Dells), John B. Du Bay kept a keelboat on the river much of the time, carrying freight from Portage City to Point Bausse. "Owing, however, to the swiftness of the current in the Dells in high water, and the numerous sand-bars in the river above and below that point, in low water, the navigation of the Wisconsin above Portage was always both uncertain and expensive, and the charges for freight, 75 cents per hundred, alone justified the expense of navigation," wrote Kingston.

According to the memoir, the first house in Juneau County was built in 1838 by R.V. Allen at the foot of the Dells, becoming a prominent stopping place for raftsmen.

In 1843, Kingston, then living "near the Grand Rapids," began a hunting and exploring expedition down the Wisconsin River through Adams and Juneau counties. Six miles below Point Basse, Kingston passed the Grignon trading post, the only "civilized improvement" between Point Basse and the Dells. At the Yellow River, he went up four or five miles, looking for pine, without success. Kingston continued to the Dells, left his skiff with Allen and returned to Grand Rapids by land.

In the winter of 1844-45, Thomas Weston and John Werner Jr., living at the Grand Rapids, also went looking along the Yellow River, in the area of what was to be Dexterville. They found large bodies of high-quality pine, but

the country belonged to Indians, and no advantage could be taken.

After the treaty of Lake Poygan in 1848, Werner and Kingston traveled up the Yellow River and found only one mill site that suited them—the site that was to become the village of Necedah.

Weston, Kingston and Werner, and Werner's partner, E.S. Miner, "being satisfied with the timber . . . took as direct a course as possible for Point Bausse, blazing as they traveled the route of the proposed road." Reaching the Wisconsin in mid-November, opposite Point Bausse, they found running ice impossible to cross. The next morning, after "a cold camping out," the ice was strong enough.

On December 21, 1848, a crew and teams left Grand Rapids. On the 22nd, they crossed the Wisconsin at Point Bausse and commenced cutting out the road 10 or 12 miles to the camp on the Yellow River.

On one 1848 trip from Grand Rapids to the camp, the men reached Cranberry Creek but found a thin sheet of ice, extending inland, not strong enough to bear them on foot. They assumed a horizontal position, said Kingston, and rolled across to the high land.

Men were dispatched to Grand Rapids for a small raft of lumber to put up shanties. They landed the raft at Pete-en-well rock. A flat boat was run down to the same place with mill wheels, gears and other mill machinery.

Come spring, new problems arose.

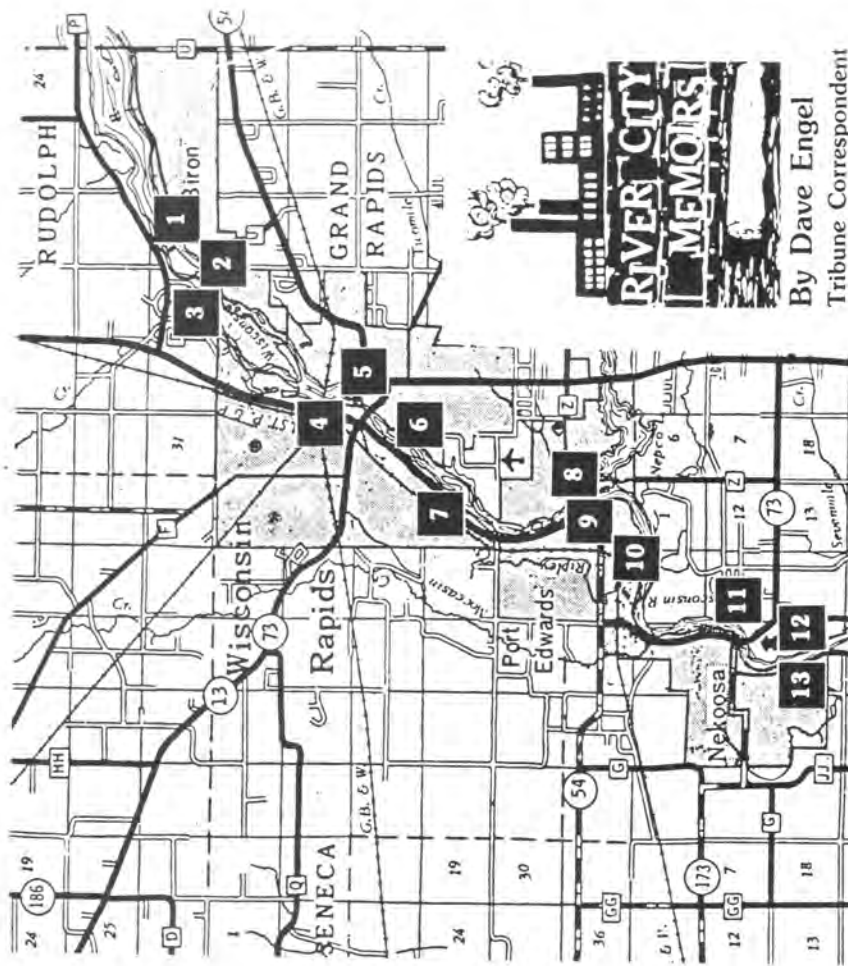
Mosquitoes annoyed the cook so much he could not bear to mix bread and substituted pancakes, "thereby relieving one hand to battle with the mosquitoes, leaving the latter the chances for being stirred into the batter, or otherwise, as accident or circumstances might determine!"



# Firsts on lower Upper Wisconsin

## Points of interest: 1840-1852

- 1** Draper, Fay & Co.; dam, lath factory and two sawmills (1840 survey map). "Widow Fay's saw mill, of one up-and-down saw, which was erected in 1839 by a Mr. Fay, who died in 1840; in 1841, Mrs. Fay sold the mill to Thos. Weston, Jess Heiden and John T. Kingston, and, in 1846, Francis Birton bought the mill." (Joseph Cotey, in 1899, reminiscing about 1846, Wood County Reporter, reprinted in History of Wood County, 1923)
- 2** Railroad (1840). Probably wooden, team-drawn logging railroad. Also depot and barn.
- 3** Wigwam: 53-foot-long skeleton (1840). "In Vol. XI, No. 2 of the Wisconsin Archaeologist, it is stated that on the farm of G.O. Weeks, southeast quarter of Section 28, Rudolph Township, is a cleared area called 'The Burnt Grounds.' Formerly, it was the only cleared space along the river for many miles, and it became a great rendezvous for Indians engaged in the fur trade. It was a famous camp site, where Indians came in great numbers and located temporarily." (History of Wood County, 1923)
- 4** Sawmill & house (1840). "There was no Centralia at the time. Here stood one double up-and-down saw mill, which also contained a lath and picket saw, and one turning lathe. This was run at that time by George Klue." (Cotey)
- 5** Double sawmill, dam, lath factory & blacksmith shop (1840). "The Clinton Saw Mill, which operated a double or two up-and-down saws; there were no gauge, rotary or band saws in those days; this mill having been built in 1838 by J.J. Cruickshank and Robert Bloomer of Galena, Ill., and, in 1840, sold to H. Clinton and Ben Single. Shortly after, Mr. Single sold his share to Mr. Clinton, who was running it in 1846." (Cotey)
- 6** Rapids & rocky chutes called Grand Rapids
- 7** Sampson's sawmill & shingle shanties (1852).
- 8** Barker's sawmill and dam "2 chs. upstream" (1851).



By Dave Engel  
Tribune Correspondent

**15** McClean's slough  
"In 1829, Mr. and Mrs. Amable Grignon of Green Bay, Wis., came up the Fox River to Portage City, and then up the Wisconsin River by boat, and located at Grignon Bend, just below the bayou, now in Adams County, on the left bank of the river. Several years later, high water in the river washed the Grignon house away, and the family located farther up the river, on the right bank, near the mouth of the McClean slough." (Geo. Wood in History of Wood County)

**16** Indian blacksmith shop  
Shown on 1840-51 survey. Treaty of 1836 mandated blacksmith shops for the manufacture and repair of traps and equipment.

**17** Oshkosh cabin  
"Next two miles down the river, stood Robert Wakely's station, which I have already mentioned. Opposite this place, on the west side, was to be seen an Indian village of about 100, all told, including



## 9 Grignon & Merrill mill and dam

(1840) "This mill was built in 1838 by Mr. Grignon and, afterward, sold to Sam Merrill, who was running the same at the time referred to." (Cotey)

## 10 Frenchtown

"At 400 ch (chains) pass 2 old Shingle Shanties. At 5.25 log house Peter Senee (?), 4.24 House of L. Sevallia (?), 5.50 House of Geo. Houle. At 2.50 opposite house F. Houle. At 1.75 opposite house Joseph Sevallia, who claims the fiction as being the first settler." (Erskine Stransbury survey notes, 1851)

## 11 Whitney mill, dam

"The first log house in Wood County was built by Mr. Whitney at Whitney's Rapids, and served the triple purpose of a trading post in his traffic with the Indians, a house of entertainment for travelers, and a personal residence ... Travelers would wrap their blankets about them and lie on the floor, their sleep being often delayed or disturbed by hungry wolves." (History of Wood County)

## 12 Wakely tavern, warehouse

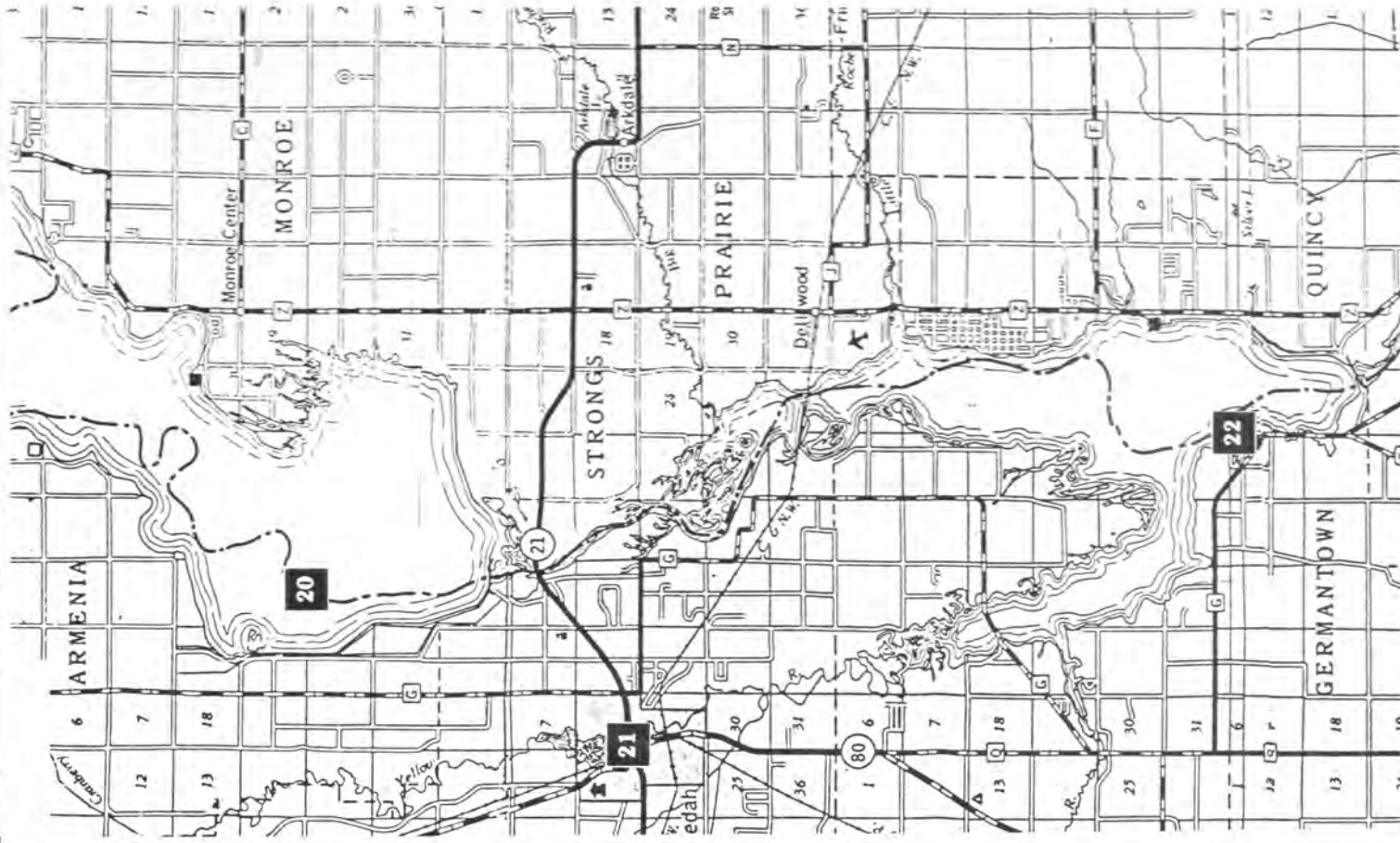
"Inhabitants are very scarce, there being a single house at Pt. Bausse, a noted place for refitting rafts after passing the rapids, before their final departure for the Mississippi ... A west line from (the) post runs between Wakely's house and barn at Point du Bois. At 70 or 80 rods distant west." (Stransbury, 1851)

## 13 Indian village

"In these woods and across the highway on the river bank was one of the largest and best known villages of the historic Indians in this part of Wood County. Until quite recently, the location of the bark houses and eight or nine cabins located here as well as the gardens, could be distinguished. The occupants most likely were a mixed band, at one time composed of several hundred Indians." (History of Wood County)

## 14 Grignon farm

"Farm and marsh 'claimed by Grignon for hay' (survey). 'Next was Rocky Erie Station, 30 miles, kept by A. Grignon, a Frenchman and an affable and good man; but he did not keep Goodhue's medicine. If a man told Mr. Grignon he had no money, he would treat him as well as if he had a million; but, for fun, Mr. Grignon would say, 'No money, you cauche (sleep) in the brush.' (Cotey)



paposes, and, seven miles below on the same side of the river, another Indian village — young Oshkosh band of Menominees. Still further down was a farm of about forty acres. It was A. Grignon's, which had now disappeared by the washing of the river." (Cotey. Shown on survey map.)

## 18 Grignon Creek

"As early as 1828, Amable Grignon had a trading post on the Wisconsin River. The first post was in Adams County on Grignon's Creek; later, he had another post on the west side of the river in Town 22, not far from Centralia." (Wis. Hist. Collections XIX. Shown on 1878 atlas.)

## 19 Old Wisconsin

The former course of the Wisconsin River constitutes the boundary between Adams and Juneau counties and is shown on this map by a broken line.

## 20 Grignon Bend

"The first day's run after this (Point Bass) was past Grignon's Bend, a long continuous reach where a sucker first pulled an oar alone. This was the hardest day's work of his life, for it was a steady pull to keep away from the banks, as the water in a band draws against the bank." (Lincoln, "Wisconsin River Rafting" in "Wisconsin Historical Proceedings, 1911")

## 21 Necedah

Mill pond, sawmill, steam sawmill, several buildings shown on 1851 survey. "The fall of 1843 saw Esquire Rice and John T. Kingston, at that time both residents of Grand Rapids, engaged in a hunting and exploration trip down the Wisconsin River ... On the seventh day of the trip and 60 miles below the Rapids, they were at the mouth of the Yellow River, having passed Grignon's Trading Post on their way, six miles below Point Bourse, the only house then standing between the Point and the Wisconsin Dells. The stream colored by ncedah shing'wauk (pigment from the needles of the yellow pine), was called by the Chippewa 'necedah,' or Yellow. The Winnebago called it 'pur kayne,' or Buckhorn." (A. M. Kingsbury, Early History of Necedah)

## 22 Whitney shingle-making site

The first industry on the upper Wisconsin was an attempt by Daniel Whitney's crew to make shingles in 1827. The enterprise was aborted by Major Twigg of Fort Winnebago, apparently because he felt Whitney had violated Indian sovereignty.



## Visions of Nekoosa

Although most readers wouldn't know him from Adam, Moses Strong was an old-time tycoon who turned his attention toward the raw materials of the Upper Wisconsin. A prominent lawyer from Mineral Point, Strong helped organize Wisconsin Territory for statehood. His investments in Wisconsin included mining, railroads, timber lands and sawmills.

According to 1949 research by Martin Lipke, Strong invested in Stevens Point's Shaurette Mill, operated by his brother, John. Strong also owned extensive lands along the river. In Stevens Point, Strong met John Slothower, a prominent merchant who owned several mills on the Little Eau Claire and Big Eau Claire rivers. The two began to look for a project to invest in.

In 1852, Strong wrote Daniel Whitney, whose sawmill and dam at Whitney's Rapids had fallen into ruin. By Dec. 7, 1854, Strong was able to purchase a half-interest in Whitney's land. On that date, said Lipke, Robert Wakely deeded to Whitney and Moses Strong a 33-foot strip on the north side of Lot 2 (Section 15), probably for a road.

In 1856, Strong had made a survey of the cost of a dam at Whitney Rapids. On May 16, 1857, Slothower wrote from Stevens Point, recommending that Strong hire Stephen Carpenter to build a dam and mill. Strong engaged Carpenter, and plans were made not only for a mill but for a complete community.

Finding Whitney apparently without enthusiasm for the project, Strong had his brother, George, visit Point Basse, as the Whitney Rapids area was known. He decided Whitney's investment was not worth \$5,000. Strong purchased Whitney's remaining half-interest in August 1857.

On Jan. 25, 1858, the Nekoosa Lumbering Co. was officially organized, with authorized capital stock of \$500,000. Strong was to receive \$40,000 for his holding. Slothower gave notes for \$16,000. Carpenter sent his note for \$6,000.

Officers of the new company were Slothower, president, and Carpenter, secretary-treasurer. Capital was solicited in vain. Nevertheless, Strong forged ahead.

A plat for the proposed village of Nekoosa was begun on Jan. 25, 1858. On Sept. 6, 1858, Carpenter

wrote Strong that the town plat was completed. Broadway, the main street, would be 120 feet wide. Nekoosa Avenue, Point Basse Avenue and Front Street would be 100 feet wide. All other streets would be 80 feet wide. There were 34 blocks in all—and a public square. The plat, on the bluff opposite modern Nekoosa, covered parts of Sections 10, 11, 14 and 15.

On June 20, 1859, Slothower suggested that the company build a boat of 20-ton capacity to travel upriver from Kilbourn to Nekoosa. Nothing came of this plan. Meanwhile, Slothower's notes were coming due, and his relative lack of interest worried both Strong and Carpenter. On Nov. 13, 1859, Strong wrote his sister, Ellen, at Rutland, Vt., asking her to invest enough money in the venture to cover Slothower's share.

In December 1859, L.P. Powers, a Grand Rapids attorney and land agent, was handling land transactions and making tax payments for Strong. Powers noted that he had received \$39.99 toward taxes, from S.J. Carpenter.

During the winter of 1859-60, timbers were cut. The building of the dam was started in the spring of 1860. Carpenter and Strong agreed that Carpenter was to receive \$3,000 in stock for his services.

On July 19, 1860, the coffer dam was finished. In September, the main dam was completed to "the island." James Cone was hired to finish the remaining section.

The dam was completed Dec. 1, 1861, at the final cost of \$15,000. On Dec. 14, 1860, Slothower's notes, for \$16,000, and Carpenter's notes, for \$3,000, were taken over by Strong. The new officers were Strong and A.G. Ellis, secretary.

On April 23, Carpenter wrote that high water had taken out a 50-foot section (which left the necessary lumber-raft slide dry) and that some lumbermen from upriver had damaged two piers near the west end with "malicious intent," causing the dam to settle 1½ feet. "If there is no remedy for such demonstrations, I am broke and cannot rebuild as per our agreement. Money is scarce. Knowing that anything that affects me affects you, and that now, as heretofore, you have been willing to do anything you could for the advancement of Nekoosa, I hope to see you soon . . . S.J.



Carpenter."

On May 11, 1861, Carpenter wrote that C.F. Goodhue, Alex Stewart, John Rablin, Hurley, Burns and other lumbermen further increased the existing gap to allow lumber rafts to pass through.

To repair the dam and put it back in shape, an agreement was reached that \$10,000 in company stock be conveyed to Carpenter's wife. Strong deeded his own share to his sister, Ellen, except for the water-power rights and land along the banks.

Not hearing from Carpenter for some time, Strong inquired as to what progress was being made. Carpenter wrote from Stevens Point: "I received your note asking for drawings for repairs to the dam. I am very busily engaged in training my company of light artillery. Will try and get someone to take care of it."

Unfortunately for Nekoosa, the War Between the States had taken precedence. Carpenter was mustered into service, although his letters, said Lipke, showed that he continued to think about

completing the industrial community of Nekoosa.

On Jan. 6, 1862, Robert Wakely wrote to Strong that he had not seen him for some time. He told Strong that Carpenter had gone off to war, leaving no one to tend the dam. Wakely added, "But you and me would make a pretty good team." He further requested permission to cut fence posts on Strong's property.

Strong wrote back: "I agree with you that you and I would make a pretty good team, and I think, if we put our heads and shoulders together, we could build the dam ourselves."

Strong gave Wakely permission to cut the posts and also asked him to undertake the dam repairs.

Wakely answered on Feb. 10 that he could not go ahead on the proposed undertaking because his boys were all away from home. He also said he had insufficient tools and equipment.

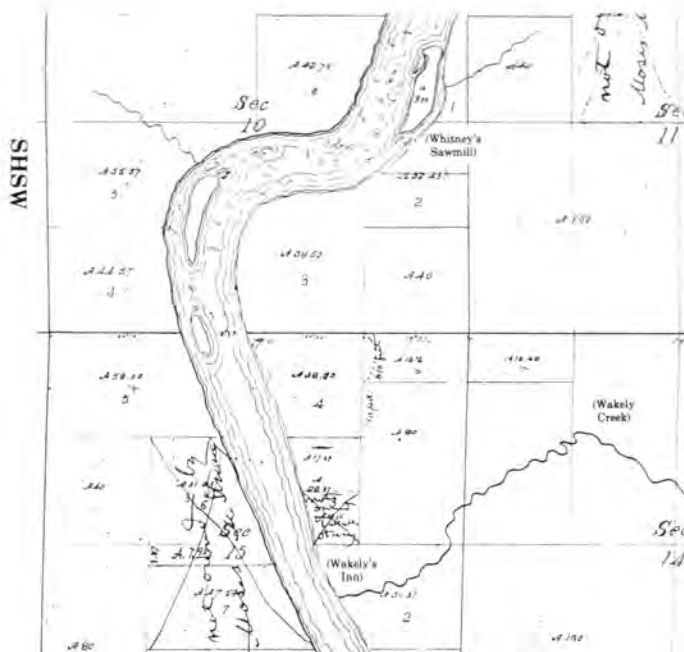
On March 11, Carpenter wrote to Strong from Racine, saying he would pay his share of taxes. Mrs. Carpenter wrote to Strong Aug. 10 that vandalism had occurred at the property. What should she do? Her fate and that of the first Nekoosa dream was sealed in July 1862, when Capt. Carpenter was killed at Murfreesboro, Tenn.

On Jan. 23, 1863, Mrs. Carpenter wrote Strong from Friendship asking that she be allowed to dispose of her late husband's tools, which had been stored at Nekoosa.

Throughout, the dam went from bad to worse. A spring freshet and another break almost destroyed it. W.D. McIndoe of Stevens Point seemed a likely prospect to take over the project, but McIndoe declined.

Strong, actively engaged all over the state in similar ventures, could not devote sufficient time to the Nekoosa project, nor could he get a qualified person to take over. With the demise of the dam, the proposed mill was scrapped and, along with it, old Nekoosa. Strong held on to his water-power rights until June 28, 1887, when he sold to George and F.J. Wood for \$4,500, an insignificant figure in light of his previous expenses.

Strong had been up the river and had an inspiration, but it was, for him and early Nekoosa, one vision too many.



Moses Strong Map



## Strong's Men

*Who came before us?*

They have not been introduced.

*What were they called?*

No one speaks their names.

*What work did they do?*

Few accomplishments remain.

*How much were they paid?*

It has been spent.

*What did they eat?*

*What did they wear?*

*How much did it cost?*

*Why were they here?*

Two sources from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin area research center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point offer data that respond to those inquiries. One is a large, 1860, leather-bound "day book" of the Nekoosa Lumbering Co. The other, its twin, is a ledger dated 1858-1861.

Of special importance to us is the fact that the "Nekoosa" of 1860 referred to a village of intermittent promise at the southernmost rapids of the Wisconsin River, known as Point Basse. It was on the east bank, opposite the present city of Nekoosa.

As we have learned, the Nekoosa Lumber Company, having built a dam, failed about the time the ledger ended.

Nekoosa, 1860. A sampling of names sings with ethnic duplicity. Nearly half harken to France or French Canada: Peter Antoine, David Brunet, George Bille Deau, Frank Belangie, Antoine Dessault, Ignace Grignon, Joseph Homier, French Peter, Henry Roulette.

The majority of the remainder derive their nomenclature from the British Isles: Levi Ripley, Horace Sweeney, Patrick

Campbell, Bishop Church, John King, Archibald McCullum, Patrick McShane, J.M. McCuen, James McGuire, John Murphy, John McDonald, John O'Brien, Job Nightengale, George Andrews and Henry Bently. Only a few Europeans, such as John Slothower and Ulrick Schenk, were involved.

Slothower seems to be an important figure to early Nekoosa. He is often mentioned as having traveled north to Wausau and south to St. Louis, presumably to obtain and market lumber.

The financial record shows many checks written on a "Wood County Bank" previous to the one now extant. Other checks seem to emanate from Galena, Ill., and St. Louis.

The major project at hand and the greatest expense was the construction of a dam for sawmill purposes. Timber for a dam, slide and head gates "at Nekoosa" cost \$3,759.07. Minor expenses of interest occur, such as two dinners at Grand Rapids served to Tristram Collins. When Asabel McCallum was paid \$2.50 for a trip to Grand Rapids, we may figure that most "provisions" were supplied on the site. Labor costs amounted to an average of about 70¢ per day for the likes of Francis Lemoureaux, Hobart Bornese and Napoleon Mahler.

In a note hinting at minor drama, for his expense "in getting blankets back," Louis Dureau was paid \$4.38. Had the blankets been loaned, stolen or lost?

A further provocative expense was incurred when the Nekoosa company paid costs relating to the dam in an appeal suit "vs. Rouleau et al." Had they encroached on the Rouleau group's riparian rights, endangered life or failed to pay a debt?



Probably, they had obstructed rafting.

A large percentage of entries relate to items purchased for a boarding house on the premises. Whether the building was owned by Robert Wakely cannot be determined from the information recorded in either volume.

The taste and smell of life in the 1860s can be conjectured from purchases made for the boarding house. The relatively high cost of tasting and smelling can also be arrived at:

Pork: 12#—\$1.50  
Coffee: 5#—\$.85  
Tea: 1¼#—\$.56  
Soap: three bars—\$.38  
Tobacco, plug and smoking—  
\$.10 to \$.80 per pound  
Syrup: 10 gallons—\$5  
Flour: 11#—\$1.48  
Sugar: 8#—\$.80

Other comestibles purchased were saleratus (baking soda), eggs, oysters, potatoes, apples, beans, butter, cinnamon, ginger, crackers, candy, cream of tartar, pepper, allspice, salt, ham, potatoes, and heart, tongue and tallow of beef.

Purchase of a single bottle of brandy (\$1.25) and two bottles of wine (\$2.50) are recorded. Castor oil also found a place at Nekoosa as well as unnamed drugs from Philleo's store. Canary seed and cuttlefish purchased might have been meant for a pet songster. The purchase of rutabaga seed was noted, perhaps for planting or feeding the bird.

Merchandise acquired included shoes (\$1.75), a dinner bell for the boarding house (\$2), shovels, "snuffers," fish hooks, nails, stove pipe, matches, shirts, "mosquito bars," underdrawers, gloves, wash

basins, a teapot, pans, a butcher knife and candles.

An example of clothing bought was Paul Pero Deau's pair of mittens (\$1.50), Gurnsey shirt (\$1.50) and pair of moccasins (\$1.50).

"Mrs. Rice," who may have been the boarding house cook, received among other items, a spool of thread for \$.05. Catherine Powderly, possibly the hired girl, was paid \$5.25 for four weeks' work. The only other woman mentioned was "Mrs. Cone," probably wife of James Cone, one of the merchants purchased from.

Other merchants were J. Homier, Sampson and Scott, J.S. Rood, Merrill and Orrick. Blacksmith equipment (stove, anvil and bellows) was bought from James J. Cone.

From Stevens Point, Cone brought back school books. A "national speller," a third reader and a Davies arithmetic were purchased by Robert "Wakeley." Wakely's name appears often. He bought two plugs of tobacco for 10¢ and was paid \$10 for two tons of hay and \$2 for two barrels of pork. On March 25, 1861, \$61.71 was paid to Wakely for 15 3/7 weeks board. He also received payment for 2½ days of hauling, 1½ bushels of rye meal and one bushel of corn meal. Wakely also paid \$7 for nails and door "sock." His name often appears in close proximity to mentions of the boarding house.

Dan Wakely, Newy Wakely, Otis Wakely and Chauncy Wakely also appear in the text.

Although the facts and figures of the Nekoosa Lumbering Co. are without face and form, they suggest a populace and personalities who were real enough to leave such a record of their existence here.



# Hebron Township

In order to understand the "pioneers" of early Wisconsin, we return to the land of their infancy—the northeastern United States.

According to previous publications, Robert and Mary Wakely sold their New York farm in 1837 and went to Wisconsin. There, they built a riverside homestead, the remnants of which are in the care of Wakely Inn Preservation Inc.

The recently published "Genealogical Histories of Harold Edward Robertson Jr. and Juanita Ann Wakely" provides sketchy details for several generations of New York Wakelys. Robert I: born 1747, in Kent, England; went to sea as a cabin boy, arrived in Connecticut in 1763, fought with the Massachusetts Militia in 1776, is said to be buried at Chamberlain's Mills, Hebron township, Washington County, New York.

The name of Robert I's wife is speculated to be Phoebe Vickery, who died February 22, 1808.

The children of Robert I are listed as:

- Samuel
- Nathan (b. May 11, 1776, in Hebron)
- Robert II (b. 1780-1790), father of Robert III?
- Isaac
- John (b. May 10, 1793; d. Jan. 13, 1864, at Johnsburg, N.Y.)
- Ann Wakely Hewitt
- Joseph (b. 1795; died 1864 at Johnsburg); married Nancy Liddle

Robert Wakely III was born April 15, 1808; married May 19, 1830, at "Genessee," N.Y.; died February 18, 1893, at Point Basse, Wis., and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery, Wisconsin Rapids. His wife Mary Odell, born in Canada April 4, 1812, died December 24, 1887.

Of Robert III's children, Chauncy (1832) and Martha (1837) are recorded as born in New York state.

Harold Craig of North Hebron provided copies of several federal censuses. The 1790 census shows Robert Wakely (I) head of a household that contains one adult male, two males under age 16 and four young females.

The 1800 and 1810 censuses show "Robert Wakely" and family living in Hebron township.

The 1820 census shows John Wakely as head of a separate household, with three children under age 10 and one under 16, one adult male over 26 and one over 45 (his father, Robert I?).

Also listed in 1820 was Robert Wakely (II?), with one male child under 10, two ages 10-16 (including Robert III?), one 26-45, two females under 10 and one 26-45.

Craig did not have a copy of the 1830 census, but the 1840 census showed no Wakelys in Hebron township.

Slightly farther west, at the Washington County office building in Fort Edward, N.Y., the only listing of a Wakely owning land was William, in 1871.

An 1825 New York state census, however, showed Robert Wakely (II?) head of a household with four males: two ages 18-45, one qualified to vote and five females, one married and four under the age of 16.

On 40 acres of improved land, Robert Wakely kept two cows, two horses, 12 sheep and seven hogs, and produced 16 yards of fulled (thickened) cloth "the domestic way," 25 yards of not fulled, 60 yards of linen, and cotton or other thin cloths.

The John Wakely family in 1825 included seven males, one 18-45 and two qualified to vote, one married female and four females under age 16. John occupied no acres of improved land and may have lived on the same farm as Robert.

John's was the only Wakely household remaining in 1835—one male and one female, one cow and one hog, on two acres.

Another step west brought other information to light, at the Warren County office building near the tourist village of Lake George, N.Y. Records for the Warren County township of Johnsburg show Wakelys not present in 1830 but present in 1840: John, Thomas, William, Robert (b. ?) and Joseph.



In 1840, Joseph Wakely is recorded with two male children, two males ages 20-30, one age 40-50, one female child, one female age 10-16 and one age 50-60.

In 1855, Joseph and his wife, Nancy (Liddle), each was 60, and Robert H. was 25.

Thomas seems to be the prominent Wakely in 1855, with 60 acres unimproved and 60 improved—on which he grew corn, potatoes and apples, kept seven cattle, two oxen, three milk cows, two horses, three pigs and 28 sheep. Thomas was 37 in 1855. His wife was

Mary.

Also in Johnsbury in 1855 were William D. (age 33 and born in Washington County), Joseph, and John (born in Washington County, age 39 and married to Susan).

From information found, it was impossible to find the location within Hebron township of the Wakely homestead.

One more step west to the Adirondack Mountains, a descendant of Robert Wakely's brother operates a large hotel named Wakely Lodge at Indian Lake, N.Y.



Robert Wakely I is said to be buried in this cemetery at Chamberlain's Mills, New York, although the gravesite has not been located.



# Walker's Hill

As Donald and Walter Tesser look off from Walker's Hill, they see to their biographical past and beyond to signs of the 1830s, when their European culture began to displace a stone-age civilization.

Walker's Hill, just south of Highway 73 on what is now County Trunk Z but once was Highway 13, apparently was named for a Walker who once owned the land. No one remembers him.

What is remembered is a sandwash gulley almost impossible to surmount from the south. The ascending vehicle negotiated a zig-zag at the bottom and came just a screamin' up snakey sand ruts so deep a Model T might bottom out.

As Walter turns to the east from Walker's crest, he can see the place of his 1919 birth, on the second farm of his father, Walter Tesser Sr., 80 acres that

now sprout a crop loosely termed "Tesserville."

After his first place burned up, Walter Sr. moved to what would become Tesserville Road, and bought a threshing machine and sawmill run by a steam engine.

Tesserville is one of many erratic outcomes of the Nekoosa paper mill strike of 1919. The strike put Claude Francis out of a job so he went to work for Tesser on the steam engine and soon bought the first lot in Tesserville. The land continued to be subdivided and sold prior to and after Walter Sr.'s departure from the family hearth in 1922. Mrs. Tesser continued to sell lots until she moved to Sigel in about 1924.

As Walter Jr.'s brother, Donald, turns west from Walker's Hill, he can see lilacs that mark the place of his 1911 birth at a farm he calls the old Whitney



Walter Tesser

1910 photograph at old Whitney farm: Thomas John Johnson, Alice Johnson, Mabel Johnson, Mads Peter Johnson, Walter Tesser, Kathryn Johnson.



place because Daniel Whitney, the great speculator of the early 1800s, first owned it after the Indians.

All that's left there now is a root cellar and the base of a silo marked 1915.

As a kid, Donald used to climb into the attic and play with old-fashioned tin washers he found there. That's how he knew about the stovepipe that caught fire the November after the silo was built.

When the fire broke out, Donald and his sister were taken from the house and set, wrapped in blankets, in four inches of snow while the flames kept them warm. Meantime, Walter Sr. struggled with the cookstove. It wouldn't fit through the doorway so he took an ax and whittled the doorway a little larger. Then he somehow rolled the piano out single-handedly.

Tesser threw Ma's guitar out the window. It hung up in the lilacs and was there the next day, kind of spoiled though. One side had been punctured by a branch.

While breaking a piece of land on the old Whit-

ney place, Walter Sr. plowed up some Indian mounds and, what with so many arrowheads, spearheads, tomahawk heads, beads and clay pipes, he figured it must have been a battleground of sorts.

Closer to the river, near the site of the first log house on Swallow Rock, according to a Tesser family history, lived for a winter Mrs. Mads Peter Johnson, Mrs. Tesser's mother. A small girl then, she stayed in a log house. Her parents moved afterward to a homestead on the Five Mile Creek. The old cellar hole of the first house could be seen faintly on the river bank, north of Point Basse, years later.

To build a house for his family, Mads Peter Johnson hauled inland many loads of broken boards that had been scattered in the river at Point Basse by the destruction of lumber rafts.

A half mile farther down the river, Donald sees the Wakeley house that he visited when his dad worked the ferry. He remembers a big cookstove, hardwood floors and a pantry.



Walter Tesser, Sr. operating upper ferry, 1915. Frank Ross and team on board.



The exterior was six-inch siding, curled and buckled, already old, paintless and weatherbeaten. He remembers a wood-shingle roof, possibly a porch on the river side, maybe a little piece of a log horse barn nearby.

The still extant larger barn was there but did not seem as old as the house, which looked about as old then as it does now. Long Ben Wakeley, some kind of descendent of Bob Wakely, lived there.

In 1915, people in that country lived pretty much without money. They farmed a couple acres, grew some corn, raised calves or pigs, and worked out a little. It might happen that Ma and Pa had two little pigs in the barn but no meat for the winter. It might happen that Ol' Norm Woods might bring over a hind quarter in a lumber wagon one autumn day and the Tessers could eat pork all winter.

It might happen in spring that Pa would go out and butcher his own pigs and take a hind quarter

over his shoulder and walk in the dark two miles to return the favor. That's the way people had to live when Bertha Schroeder came in with her city money and dressed to kill.

Old Lady Schroeder and her husband had bought the Wakely farm. She drove a black horse and a top buggy, with shiny spokes, and wore a black dress, bustle, and big hat, all black. She was a go-getter and told fortunes to those neighbors she could get along with.

Down the bank from the Wakeley-Schroeder house was the landing and ferry run earlier by Ben Wakeley and later, when ice- and pulp-cutting failed to produce Donald's father enough income, by Walter Tesser Sr. With the 1916 bridge imminent, those were the waning days of the ferry.

Tesser also ran the upper ferry at Nekoosa, which was run by a motor-driven cable.



"The Old Ferry Farm" in 1976 Milwaukee Sentinel photo.



The lower ferry, at Wakeley's was driven by the current of the river. You lifted the ramp, poled the ferry into the current and let the rudder down. A cable kept it on course. If the water was high and fast, the ferry might go pretty good. If the water was slow, you might have to pole all the way across with jack-pine trunks.

Sometimes, the river got low enough to wade. Old piers could be seen where rafts had tied up. Indians had crossed here, begging sometimes corn meal and sugar from the whites.

On Sunday, the Nekoosa mill shut the dam off and people came down to spear fish.

The ferry was used by farmers going to Nekoosa with potatoes and other produce. By cutting over here, they could avoid a bad hill going in and a bad hill coming out of Nekoosa.

Some drivers preferred the hills to the 20-cent-per-wagonload fee for the ferry and drove up the

river road past Swallow Rock all the way up to the Rapids.

This is some of what Walter and Donald Tesser can see from Walker's Hill.

What they can't see, although they saw it as boys, is the old cemetery on top of the hill, because the sandstone slabs marking the seven or more graves have disappeared.

Donald Tesser says that, when he was a boy the oldtimers would come around and visit with his pa.

They'd start tellin' yarns and they'd say 20 years ago and 30 years ago and 40 years ago, and Donald thought like all of us kids have thought, "By God, how old must them guys be that they can remember back 40 years!"

Now we try to make a vision of what the places seen from Walker's Hill were like, even before the men who were old when Walter and Donald Tesser were young, were young.



Identified as "a desolate bunkhouse.



# The Eccentricity of Berty Schroeder

## Sun, Moon & Stars

**Death certificate:** Bertha Ludwig Schroeder, no Social Security number.

**Born:** January 15, 1880, Germany.

**Father:** Erwin Ludwig.

**Died:** October 29, 1957, carcinoma of the left breast at age 77. Also chronic brain syndrome associated with senile brain disease.

**Home:** Saratoga, Wood County.

**Place of death:** Winnebago State Hospital, rural Oshkosh.

Berty always worked in the garden. She passed out advice about growing things. She could tell you just how to raise any flower or vegetable.

Her daughter sent her beautiful pieces of cloth. Yet she never wore a skirt that didn't come to her ankles, and always a hat. She wore her hair in a bun.

She had six or eight dogs. You couldn't have a dog but what those dogs would come and kill it. They went and tore up some goats. They tore the bag on a cow. Those dogs were like a pack of wolves.

We called her "the sun, the moon and the stars." When she came to visit, she would tell me that I was water and my husband was fire. It made a good marriage because water would quench fire.

Tall, thin, willowy with blondish red hair, she seemed ageless; she didn't look any different to me from the time we moved here.

Her first husband worked all the time in the field across the road and in the vegetable garden. She took the stuff to sell at the better places in town. Peddled her horoscopes too.

Once in a while when the boys went down there, she might be in a good mood and would dance. She showed how she could kick above her head.

In winter, I had to go down and start her car. She never paid me. Instead, she claimed I was stealing something. She sent cards to the neighbors saying, "You stole my blankets. You stole my cheese." One time, she didn't write the word but she drew little chickens on the bottom.

Every time she came down here to use the phone, she'd tell horoscopes. She'd tell us what our good days were.

One winter, right after a snowstorm, I had a dog out here in a coop. My father-in-law's car was parked out in front. Her damn dogs came grabbing

at mine in the coop. I fired a shotgun at them to scare them off. The next morning, my father-in-law went out to go to work and found his tire flat. There were bullet holes in the fender and the headlight was broken.

She had a cancer on her chest. She showed it to the kids. It looked like a big red rose.

During the Depression, she would tell my husband, who was a Capricorn, same as her, "You go look for a job today. This is the best day to look for a job." He never did get a job on the day she said.

At first, she had a horse and buggy that she took up the hill on the river road. After she got that little brown '36 Ford V-8, she'd go through here. She drove that car a long time but never put it in high gear. She'd always drive in second.

Her dog, Booboo, was vicious. He was chasing our dog Pepper down by the creek when I pulled up and shot him with my .22.

One time she got mad at her second husband and came running down the road with him ahead of her. She had a hot frying pan full of potatoes.

My dad was working for the county fixing the bridge when he saw her dancing in the field. He told me she was very graceful. She didn't want the bridge fixed because she didn't want anybody down there.

We were going to buy a piece of land from her but she told us what kind of house we'd have to build, with a cupola on top so we could watch for people that were going to steal from us.

The kids used to like to ice skate on the road. She used her horse and team to sand it so no one could skate.

Her first husband, Fred, was a very nice guy. He was out working in that darn field all the time. She wouldn't let him off the place.

One time, our golden retriever went over there when her dog was in heat. Mrs. Schroeder broke our dog's back.

She said she was a princess and her father was a king who had left a big inheritance. She gave me a number to call.

Berty came into Montgomery Ward to buy a battery for her car. I told her to take a battery holder. She said, "No, I gotta use my own two hands." She said she had walked from her house to Nekoosa, had taken the bus to Rapids, got off the bus by the bank and walked to Montgomery Ward where she



bought the battery and carried it in her own two hands to the bus stop, rode the bus to Nekoosa and walked all the way home. Then she couldn't get the battery in the car and had to get Art Coerper to put it in for her.

In the spring before my husband and I got married, she told me that year I'd have the best luck I ever had in my life.

When she was married to her second husband, she was chasing him with an ax. Every time he'd stop running, she'd swing the ax. He ran into his folks' place and she wouldn't let him go back to get his clothes. He had to borrow a high school jacket with high school kids' names written all over it. "Weren't you scared you would kill him when you hit him with that ax?" I said. "Oh no," she said. "I knew just how far he was ahead of me."

She wanted to be a recluse so we left her alone. We didn't want to be accused of stealing.

You could hear and see her running through the woods like a deer, yelling for her lost dog, "Here,

Booboo. Here, Booboo."

**Obituary:** *Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Feldner funeral home for Mrs. Bertha Schroeder, 77, Rt. 2, Nekoosa, who died at 6:40 p.m. Tuesday at Oshkosh . . . Burial will take place in Riverside Cemetery.*

*Mrs. Schroeder was born in Germany on January 15, 1880, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Erwin Ludwig, the family moved to Chicago when she was five years old. She married Frederick Schroeder in Chicago on September 2, 1899, and they moved to Rt. 2, Nekoosa, in 1917. Mr. Schroeder died April 26, 1934.*

A daughter, Elvera Otto, of Suffern, N.Y., had provided the information.

To Mrs. Otto would also fall the responsibility for the old farm Berty had lent such character to, known in her time as "the Schroeder place," known mostly now as "the Wakely House."



Consolidated News

"Former Wakely Tavern at Point Basse (2nd structure—first burned)." According to 1930 Consolidated News.



## Remodeling the Otto Place

### Carl Morrison

In 1977, I asked Carl Morrison about history. What did he know about Jack Monson, the previous owner of the land I had just purchased. I was obsessed with Jack Monson.

Morrison, a plumber, was my neighbor then. I spoke with him as he installed a submersible pump in my well, threading each length of galvanized pipe, lowering the heavy pipe with thick, strong hands. He didn't know too much about Monson.

A couple of years later, when lightning struck the pump, Morrison raised the heavy pipe piece by piece, had the pump fixed, and lowered it again.

Somewhat later, he disappeared from my road.

This April, Morrison called me. He had some information I might be interested in. It was about a part-time job he once had remodeling the Wakely house.

Last week, I talked to Morrison again at 441 13th Ave. N., where he moved after his retirement.

"It was about the summer of 1962 when I was working in the Biron mill. I lived out on 3rd

Avenue at the time," said Morrison.

"Charles Otto went to Kreutzer to get some plumbing work done and Kreutzer referred him to me. After my shift or on my days off, I had to go down to Ottos.

"I did quite a bit of work there—plumbing, general wiring, carpenter work. My brother, David, worked with me and my son, Gene."

Morrison described some characteristics of the Otto structure, which he said had been "built the way old houses were:"

—A former or partial stairway somewhere in the middle of the house; two-by-six joists in the ceiling; 24-inch, rough-sawn pine sheathing in the outside walls.

—Studs that didn't stop at eight feet (ceiling joists notched in); cove trim, beveled outside instead of inside; stone and lime mortar foundation; square nails.

The outside of the house had settled while the inside hadn't and the house had suffered from



Carl Morrison

East facade of Wakely House after remodeling, 1963. Joan Morrison (Draper) pictured.



vacancy. "Everything was froze up or broke," he said. "So many kids had got in."

Morrison remembered a bedroom in the southwest corner, a kitchen on the east side "with a little wall around it," and a dining room on the north side—on the first floor. Heat was provided by a spaceheater in the northwest corner. A chimney went out the side of the house.

The Ottos did not use the second floor.

Scorched ceiling joists in the kitchen area seemed to be evidence of a past fire.

Morrison listed some of the work he did:

- Installed cabinets on the inside walls. (There were cabinets on the outside walls.)
- Put up a partition in the kitchen.
- Planed and jacked doors so they would open and shut.
- Possibly put in the bathroom.
- Attached wainscoating.
- Installed used glass doors on the west side.



Carl Morrison (1927-1987)

—Repaired ceiling at old staircase, where joists had fallen. "In order to be level, we had to fill in the surface of the drywall and sand the whole works with an electric sander."

—Screened and cemented foundation on the west side.

Skunks had invaded the little cellar but Morrison was not allowed to trap or kill them. "The Ottos wanted them out but they didn't want to destroy them."

Nor was he allowed to disturb the legions of bats in the upper reaches. Mrs. Otto defended the animal life and would not allow fishing on her property. "She had a couple cats. They were more important to her than anything."

Morrison removed the open, spindled porch and repaired some of the siding. He said that while he was working on the edge of the roof, around the cove work, you could stick a nail or a hammer in any place you wanted and get bats.

More bothersome to him was Col. Otto, just as fussy as his wife.

"He had a hand that shook," said Morrison. "Whenever we were working, he was right up behind. All you could see was that hand. It got on your nerves."

When Morrison worked, Otto stood at his elbow. "There was his flickin' hand. You could see it out of the corner of your eye. The more nervous he'd get, the worse it'd go."

Col. Charles Otto's fall from grace is here depicted.

It seems Morrison and his brother were working on an extension ladder near the roof. Otto climbed the ladder so he could get a closer look at what he was paying for.

As Otto reached the heights of his inspection, the bottom of the ladder slipped out a little bit. The colonel's feet dislodged and went right through the rungs.

"He couldn't move and every time he tried to move, he went 'oh, ow.' I didn't dare look at him but I laughed till I cried."

Between the owners and the owned, Morrison was glad when he finished working at the Otto's.

"In that house, you couldn't really plan on anything. You had to just make do as it came along because nothing fit, nothing was level. It seemed the more we done, the more there was to do."



# Louisiana Red Devils

## Al Ross

Al Ross thought he was the only person alive who actually lived in the Wakely house. Born April 9, 1900, he said he couldn't have been more than 12 when his father, Frank, ran the lower ferry.

The ferry was driven by the current of the river. A cable or rope unwinding from each side guided the device. When someone wanted to get across, Ross said, he hammered a wood saw hanging from a post.

The ferry had aprons on front and back that would be dropped at the shore so the teams could get on or off.

An old guy down the road liked his beer, Ross's dad told him, and often picked up kegs in Nekoosa, usually coming back drunk to the ferry. One night, somebody stole the keg and the old guy never knew it until he got home. He came back mad but couldn't find who had stolen his keg.

When Ross lived in the Wakely house, he said there was a stoop in front of one of the doors, where he and his brother played in summer. "My mother came out one day, calling for my younger brother, Lloyd. I looked around to find him. Finally, I went down to the river. There was Lloyd, wading out to meet the ferry boat coming from the other side.

When that old ferry boat was abandoned, said Ross, they floated it down to Germantown.

Frank Ross told Al that the Wakely building had been an old trading post. Frank had helped float lumber down as far as St. Louis. He said rivermen going downstream would stop overnight for food and lodging.

Although Al does not remember much about the Wakely building, he was able to give some impressions. There were several rooms on the first floor: an old-fashioned pantry, a kitchen and a large room where Ross imagined the rivermen spent the night. There was no bar room or anything similar, he said. Upstairs were bedrooms.

The existing barn is the only major outbuilding Ross remembers. It was there, as a boy, that he even saw a lynx, staring down at him from some planks above.

"I got out of there in a hurry," he said.

Down the river a ways was a slough and near it lived a little gentleman by the name of Christian, who had a white goatee. "Any time Dad had to get off for a day," said Ross, "this old fella would come up and run the ferryboat."

Some Wakelys still lived nearby; Louis and Adeline, until they left to go out West gold mining, and Robert, an old friend of Frank's, who lived up along by the bottom of Walker Hill until he went out West too.

In somewhat later years, said Ross, Mrs. Schroeder and her husband lived in the house. "She had more dogs than you can imagine in that place.

"Old lady Schroeder used to run around with a horse and buggy peddling stuff. She would look at the stars and tell your fortune and all that."

At the time Frank Ross was chairman of the town board, Saratoga laid a road clear to the river but not before having quite a go-round with Bertie Schroeder.

Because of debris in the river, no boat landing or use was ever developed and the road was abandoned.

Al Ross' formal first name is Curtis. "The old-timers know me as Al," he said. "I used to run a dance band and went by the name, Al Ross."

When Ross was about 16 years old, he played the "old-fashioned violin" at house parties every Saturday night. "As soon as the sun went down, they'd come and stay until the sun came up in the morning," he said. "About chore time, they'd pull out and go home."

Square dances and the two-step were popular. Ross played "Turkey in the Straw," schottisches and hop waltzes. His favorite song was "Over the Waves."

Later, Ross' folks bought him a trumpet from Sears Roebuck and he took a dozen lessons from Danny Ellis. "The rest of it I learned from experience," he said. Ross played with "different outfits" for a while before forming his own band, "Al Ross and the Louisiana Red Devils."

While working nine-hour days in the finishing room of the Nekoosa mill, he sometimes drove as many as 85 miles one way at night to play. "We got around by car," he said. "I had a big box on the back and on the side. Boy, we had a load, I'm telling you."

The Louisiana Red Devils played in the big-band ballroom era.

Up at Thorp, said Ross, they might play to anywhere from 1,000 to 1,400 people. Couples got in for a dollar. There was plenty of "near beer" out back



if you wanted to look for it.

Today, Ross lives on the town of Saratoga farm where he was born, not too far downstream from the Wakely site. The Ross place is one of our most historically marked—by a large number of Indian mounds at what is now Deer Trail Park Campground on Ross Lake.

“The mounds used to run clear across that field down to the Ten Mile,” said Ross; “the field being worked all the time they worked them down. We used to plow up spots where the Indians had campfires. We found a lot of arrowheads. In later years, it has been pretty well picked over.”

Although Ross played his trumpet for 50 years, his career had been threatened by a 1951 hunting accident in which a .30-.30 slug lodged in his mangled right hand. On his left hand, one finger hung almost severed.

At the hospital, Ross said he wanted “Dr. Lee” Pomainville to treat him.

Pomainville already was busy with another emergency but he stuck his head in the room and said, “Al, I’ll be right with you as soon as I get done.”

In the meantime, another doctor inspected the wound and told Pomainville, “You might as well take it off.”

When Ross looked at his own hand, he said he could envision less a hand than a hook in place, but Pomainville vowed, “Damn it, I’ve known Al all my life and I’m going to try to save that hand.”

Pomainville put Ross’ playing hand back together although, said Ross, “I played two jobs with my other hand. I had ‘em booked—I had to play ‘em.”



Al Ross

**Al Ross and the Louisiana Red Devils:** Dan Ellis, Al Ross, William Gibson, Russell Matthews, Floyd Fox, Miles Sandon, Darrel Matthews, James Miller.



# Renting the Ferry Farm

## Earl Taylor

### "That's a haunted house!"

*"Oh that's a haunted house you live in."*

*All the kids in the neighborhood say so. My wife hears a noise on the basement stairs and thinks, "We got a ghost down there."*

*I go down and can't see anything. I tell her it must be a cat.*

*She keeps hearing the noise and after a while won't go down in the basement.*

We got there because we were friends of Paul Page, a neighbor of the Wakely house, which they called the Schroeder place at that time. He told me the owners were moving back to New York and would rent the place.

"I had never been down there before. When I saw it, I thought, 'well, it's pretty rustic.' I loved the location.

That was in 1954, right after Petenwell had come in and raised the river. Nepco had put them a well on the side hill. They piped the water underground to the house.

The place was all run down when we got there. Brush and grass as high as your knees all the way around.

At that time, there were chicken coops and pig pens behind the house and an old granary to the southeast.

The owner, Mrs. Otto, had some old antique stuff in there, I guess from her mother, Mrs. Schroeder. Old glass shaded lamps and stuff like that.

The granary was up on posts so air could circulate. I used it for a saw sharpening shop. At that time, I worked for Nekoosa-Edwards woodlands.

In the barn was some old hay or straw in the haymow. And a big electric motor. Where that come from I don't know. In winter, I used the barn to put the car in.

We used to fish the mouth of Wakeley Creek. Walleyes would come right up into it and trout down from Getzin's marsh.

That little creek would flood in spring. I have seen the time you couldn't get across the bridge.

The old cable from the ferry was across the river

yet. A couple old concrete piers stood south of the bridge like the original road must have gone there.

I always remember the good land. We raised a garden there that you couldn't believe. I planted potatoes above the hill but the soil was not nearly as good, it was so sandy.

Ovid Berard used to farm the fields around there. Between the house and the creek, he cut hay. That land had been worked over pretty good by the fifties.

The twins were three or four months old when we moved there. Debbie was born when we lived there and my mother also lived with us at that time so that house was a little crowded.

At that time there was a porch all the way across the back side of it and one two-thirds of the way across the front.

The basement was an old cellar hole with a dirt floor. The place next door used to flood but there was never any water in our basement.

The only place there was any cement block was to shore up that corner where the bathroom was put in. Even then, the plumbing froze. Unthawing the toilet with a blowtorch under there, it's a wonder I didn't burn the place down.

There was a hand pump by the kitchen sink but it didn't work so we took it out. In winter, the kitchen sink drain would freeze up and you'd have to take the plumbing apart and put a bucket under it.

There were two rooms on the ground floor with a chimney in the middle and a wood stove on each side. I remember up in the attic above the kitchen stove seeing charred wood.

Upstairs, there was a padlocked closet. Mrs. Otto would not allow it unlocked. She was a very eccentric person.

One time she was going to take my oldest back to New York and give her a good life. The next time, she comes and it's "Oh, them brat kids."

Finally, I took a couple screws off the closet door. There was nothing holding it but rotten wood.

Inside was an old double barrel shotgun. Instead



of putting bluing on the barrel, they had painted it blue. Some of her old dolls, a couple old toys, old pillows, items of sentimental value is all there was in the closet.

When the Ottos retired, we had to move out. The last time I was in there I was with the phone company and hooked up the phone. By that time, they had remodeled it.

In our time, we had enough problems surviving. I suppose if I'd known we'd have to remember these things thirty years later I would have remembered more.

*A couple days later, my wife heard a noise down there in the basement. She opened the door. They had little shelves where the steps went down. On those steps was your ghost.*

*It was a possum.*

*Needless to say, he died. She went and got a .22 and killed him right there. The bullet put a little hole in the steps but she got rid of the problem.*



Terri Taylor, Debra Taylor, Linda Fuhrman, Peggy Fuhrman, rear. Randy, Ricky, Tom Taylor, front. Southeast corner of living room, facing river.



## Earl Taylor

### “I thought, “The river!” ’

*Earl Taylor:*

I had just started as a lineman for the Wood County Telephone Co. when my boss came out and got me. My wife had called and told him our son Tom was missing.

Tom had just started kindergarten; the spring we moved there, he was supposed to ride the bus home.

When I heard he hadn't come home, I thought,

“the river!” The day before, he had walked down to the river with me. He was fascinated by that water.

The bus had picked him up to take him home. Somewhere around noon, he made arrangements with some little kid to meet and play. He got off the bus and took off up the road without telling his mother.

The police found him and his little friend playing along the road.



Early Taylor snapshot of his '53 Ford, Wakely House to left.



## Tom Taylor: 'A big barn full of white lightning'

*Tom Taylor:*

One time, I was playing with matches by an old shed when my grandma came around the corner. When I put my hands behind my back, I thought I had the match out but it burned my fingers and I had to let it go.

She was coming to get me for dinner. I looked around and didn't see anything burning anywhere.

About the time I went in the house and finished dinner, there was nothing but black smoke going by the window. That old junk shed had got on fire.

The big old barn was full of sulfur and white lightning. We used to mess around with big chunks of sulfur.

When my dad was getting rid of a huge bees nest in that barn, he told us it was white lightning in those gallon jugs.

Me and a bunch of neighbor kids poured the stuff down a little well they had between the barn and

the creek. I dropped a match and it was like a jet engine going off.

A bunch of us kids, the Coons, Milton Coerper, my sister, got together and started out in a canoe down the creek. We were just about to the river when my mother caught us.

A cable from the ferry ran through there for a while, to the left of where the road went all the way down. Dad always wanted to pull the cable up. People fishing snagged on it all the time.

In the house, there was a big hallway upstairs that was almost a room. That's where I slept. In the bedroom at the left of the stairs was my grandma. In the middle was my sister and at the end my folks.

There were dogs coming down to that place all the time. I think Dad adopted a couple of them. People always said Mrs. Schroeder had a lot of dogs. Maybe they were looking for her.

## Terri Taylor Anderson: 'Just an old house we lived in when I was a kid'

*Terry Anderson (Earl Taylor's oldest child):*

What do I remember?

Playing in the old barn. We used to climb in the old cloth-top black buggy in there. Neighbor kids said Mrs. Schroeder used to ride up and down the road in that buggy.

Snakes by the river. Blow snakes. We were afraid of them. Mom would come out with a gun and shoot them.

Little shacks. My dad sharpened chain saw blades in one of them.

The day Tom burned the shed. It used to be our playhouse in summer. Mom ran and tried to put it out.

Marking the garden. Dad was planting the

garden. We were on for weight. The marker clipped in and went over me. It scraped me all up.

A back porch with windows. A little storage shed at the end of the front porch.

An archway in the living room. The beam started at the floor and went across the ceiling.

Small pieces of stained glass above the living room window facing the river.

Upstairs, the closet she had locked. I often wondered what was so important. She came once and took out a tin box full of sea shells and gave them to me. I still have them.

What a junky house it was. Just an old house we lived in when I was a kid.



# The Wakely Barn

A 1965 letter from Leonard Christian, a descendant of Robert and Mary Wakely, to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Otto, then inhabitants of the Wakely house, provides information about a sequence of barns on Wakely Inn Preservation Inc. property.

"There was a big barn between the creek and your house. It was about 60 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a lot of stalls for oxen or horses, and, above the animals, was a hay loft, with plenty of wild hay stored. I think this barn was torn down about 1908 and a much smaller barn was built. I guess this last barn is also gone now. The Wakeleys had a certain way of building barns, and there were three in and around the country."

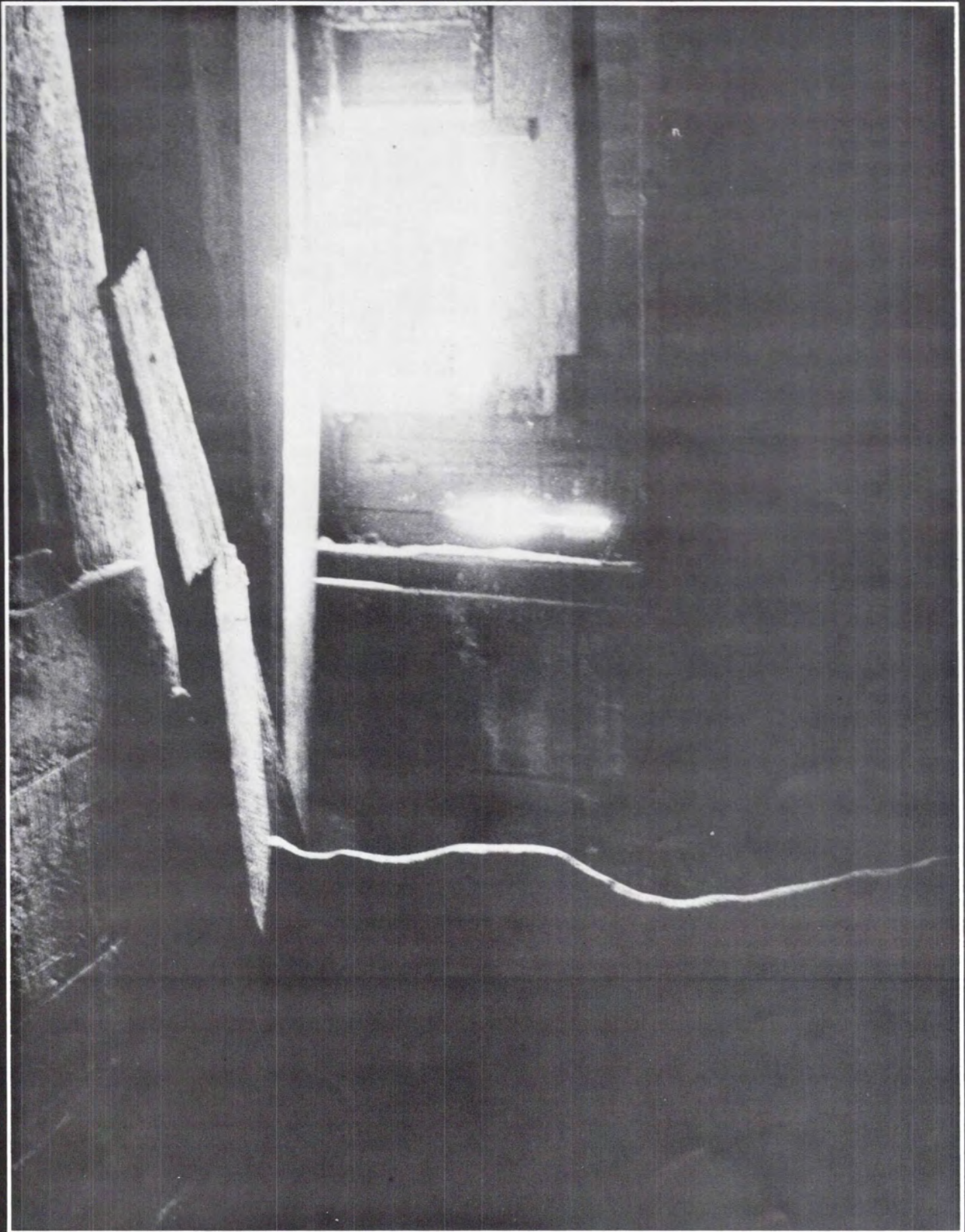
Evidence in the barn presently along Wakeley Road, east of the house, seems to indicate that

much of the building material had been salvaged from other structures. Old beams have been sawed off and now functionless pegs remain in holes. Hinges and other superannuated hardware remain. A variety of lumber also suggests other applications.

**Animal Life:** Many years of chewing and rubbing long ago wore the lip of the manger, shown at right, to a sensuous curve.









# Early America

## The Sherman House

When Judy and Ken Dankemeyer set about repairing damage done by a fire earlier this year at their Early America tavern at 602 Market St., they removed a porch and revealed, in large letters, "Sherman House." No one has been able to establish the origin of the lettering nor does anyone contacted remember having seen it. Almost without a doubt, no one alive ever visited the "Sherman House."

The most likely conjecture to date as to the name is provided by an earlier Daily Tribune article and the abstract to the property. On October 4, 1945, Jane Jackson wrote in the Daily Tribune that the building had been purchased in 1893 from a man named Burns. She said she had obtained the information from the 1945 proprietors, Fred and A.W. Bentz.

At the time of acquisition, said Ms. Jackson, the building was a rough-pine framework about 100 feet long, with a wide wing off the side. It was intended to be used as a boarding house "but Mr. Burns did not get around to fixing it up for that." Indeed, William Burns was among those who signed 1893 incorporation papers for a new city of Nekoosa.

It most likely was Burns who caused to be painted "Sherman House" on the front facade, either in honor of a specific person, such as Gen. William Sherman who died in 1891, or in search of a generally high-class name.

However ritzy the title, Burns' establishment was subject to foreclosure and was sold by sheriff's deed on April 1, 1895, to Henry Ullrich of Milwaukee. Burns and the Nekoosa Paper Co. owed more than \$1,700 to John Daly and Henry Sampson.

Ullrich turned over the property on October 16, 1895, to August Bentz and his wife, Amalge, for "\$1 and other property." The Bentzes took a \$1,500 mortgage from Ullrich and another \$1,000 mortgage from the Pabst Brewing Co.

## Bentz Hotel, Saloon

Bentz had been employed by a Milwaukee brewery, delivering beer by team and wagon. A strong, heavy man, he said he had once got stuck in a mudhole and carried the half-barrels by hand.

He had been born in 1856, in Germany, and had immigrated to the United States in 1870. His wife, whose name then was spelled "Amalge" but who was known as Amalia (Rubenhorst or Ravenhurst), had been born 1867, in Germany, and had immigrated in 1873.

The couple seem to have met in Milwaukee, where Amalia worked as a domestic for a brewery family.

Bentz took an unfinished Sherman House and made it into a hotel that accommodated 30 to 40 Nekoosa Paper Co. millworkers and a few transients. He added the porch that covered up the name, Sherman House.

The building contained a large dining room, kitchen, reception hall and hotel rooms. In the saloon was a long bar, probably purchased from the Kaudy Manufacturing Co. of Grand Rapids.

The 1900 census showed four children: Elma (born in 1881), August (1883), Willie (1886) and Fred (1888). Two servants, Ida Maas and Antone Jogerginski, helped care for 10 boarders.

At the Bentz saloon, you could get a large schooner of beer for a nickel and a shot of whiskey for a dime.

## An incident

"The little village of Nekoosa was all excitement," said the Wood County Reporter on February 14, 1907.

Brothers-in-law Julian Marth and Albert Neunfeldt, two farmers from "the other side of the river," met in the village. As was their custom when drunk, they began to quarrel.

In the Bentz Saloon, the battle was renewed. Marth ran at Neunfeldt, who knocked him down with his fist and hit him on the head with an iron cuspidor.

Neunfeldt left town.

Marth rose and went to Dr. Waters, who bandaged his head. About 8 p.m., Marth came back into the saloon, sick apparently from drinking too much. Bentz fixed some blankets at one end of the saloon for Marth to lie on.

About 9:30, Neunfeldt returned. He said he wanted to take Marth home but was refused admittance.

About 10 p.m., a curious newcomer inspected the drunken man in the corner and concluded he was dying. Marth was dead by 10:15.

Of the two, Marth was considered the most severe reprobate. Sentiment seemed to be with Neunfeldt.

At the May 23 trial, the jury could not agree on a verdict, and the newspaper speculated whether Neunfeldt might have to stand trial the next term.

## Prohibition

In 1919, the 18th Amendment outlawed the sale of liquor, a prohibition that stood until the 21st Amendment in 1933. German-Americans especially tended to resent this federal law and circumvented it whenever possible. At the Bentz Saloon, legal "near beer"



could be purchased at the bar. You also could ask for a bottle of moonshine from the back room, although you would have to drink it outside. The moon was hard-tasting stuff, said to be manufactured in northern Wisconsin and stored in barrels at a rural Nekoosa barn.

## Making hotel a home

Activities in the bar did not interfere with the successful raising of three families: First, the elder August's, then those of his two sons, Fred and Gus.

Fred brought home his wife, Ethel, a Nekoosa milliner from McGregor, Iowa. August came with his wife, Anne, a school teacher he met in North Dakota, where he homesteaded a claim.

Fred and Ethel had three children. August and Anne had six.

On Sunday morning, Fred's family went to Lutheran services; August's, to Catholic.

Besides family, four or five neighborhood children might sit down to dinner, making 15 or 20 at the long table. When Fred tended bar, Ethel cooked. When Gus tended, Anne cooked.

After dinner, the table was cleared for games, stories, plays and ping pong.

Anne, the former teacher, tutored family and friends alike.

Grandpa August often took the children on his knee and sang German songs in a deep, German accent. He said Germany was a beautiful country but he didn't talk much about it.

Over the years, the place underwent some changes. A large room in front, which was the original dining room and kitchen, was converted to tavern as meals no longer were served to the boarders. A dance hall out back burned.

The horse shed was torn down and replaced by a garage. A fire damaged much of the hotel.

On March 2, 1938, Grandpa August died and his sons officially took over the Bentz Hotel, operating it until it was sold to Oscar and Hildegard Bey in 1953.

## Distinguished visitor

Nekoosa Constable Jake Friedrichs, a German immigrant from the early days of the town, was a good friend of August Bentz. Consequently, his son had been a childhood friend of Fred Bentz.

Even when he had grown and became world-famous, Bob Friedrichs—"Strangler Lewis," the wrestler—returned to visit the Bentz place. He and Fred would train together, running on the streets of Nekoosa.

To the children, Strangler Lewis liked to show off his world-championship belt.

At the time when Ladies Aid met at the Bentz, Strangler's mother attended.

## Early America secrets

Since the recent fire and exposure of the Sherman House sign, John and Jeff Dankemeyer, sons of Ken and Judy, have explored for unusual aspects of this old landmark, at least twice ravaged by flames. Some of these idiosyncrasies had been pointed out by Bentz descendants visiting from out of town.

In the attic are blackened boards from an earlier fire. Above a kitchen doorway, a molding can be removed, revealing an empty space. Hooks on a coat rack turn, allowing the backing to be opened to another small vault. Three trap doors lead to the basement. A tunnel to the garage has been described but not explored. Below the garage is a basement piled with empty bottles and rotting wooden kegs.

All clues suggest a clandestine past some time between the Sherman House and Early America.





## Best Little Bagnio in Centralia

For some, the name "Centralia" a century ago became synonymous with "depravity." In May, 1880, according to the Wood County Reporter, these activities occurred:

Saturday: "a warrant was issued for the arrest of one of the gilded females that make their headquarters at one of the bagnios that ornament our sister city, Centralia, on complaint of one of her victims, whom she had relieved of about \$50."

Sunday: the arrest of the gilded female.

Monday: gilded female arraigned in justice court, but the complainant having been kept drunk, he could not appear against her and she was discharged.

In a related matter, "Joe Jambo, proprietor of one of those lewd character resorts in Centralia," was charged with threatening to kill his wife.

In July, 1880, the Reporter said that a "sink of iniquity at the railroad Y" was demoralizing many of the community's youth.

"They seem to have no modesty or respect not even to allowing a young man to pass his way unmolested, but at every opportunity hail them and talk nice to them and inveigle them in, to dethrone them their manhood and virtue leaving them mere serfs to passion. It is about time the authorities took these recreant vipers in hand and dealt with them as the law prescribes.

The Reporter claimed to have the names of young men and boys who had recently been caught washing their hands and souls in the same sink of iniquity. "We are no longer surprised at the low ebb the minds and morals of our youth is coming to," said the Reporter. "Citizens do your duty."

As a postscript, the paper added, "These remarks apply to both sides of the river."

In November, the Reporter once again struck out against the "nests of vice."

"It seems singular that there is so little moral tone in these two cities. Why are such ruinous cesspools allowed to remain in our midst, from which poisonous fumes arise, and cause the young as well as the old to stumble and die before their time?"

At least Grand Rapids and possibly Centralia decided to clean up their cesspools in October, 1882. An ordinance was passed to prohibit houses of ill fame in the city.

Any person who would keep such a

bawdy house or brothel would be liable for a fine of not less than fifty dollars and not more than \$150 plus court costs.

Every common prostitute playing her vocation at a house of ill fame or anywhere within the city limits as well as every person found in such a house visiting for the purpose of prostitution or lewdness would be liable to a fine of not less than \$10. Anyone found guilty of violating the ordinance and unable to pay the fine would be committed to the Wood County jail.

The matter was approached but not laid to rest. In July of 1888, the Reporter once again found reason to speak out although with somewhat less rhetorical flourish than formerly.

"Certain young men in these communities are becoming too bold in their misdeeds by sustaining that house of prostitution in our sister city (Centralia) which is being conducted by a woman—who probably has forgotten the early training of a kind and affectionate mother—and has fallen to the depth of degradation which prompts her to rob our young men of that which is hard to bestow—character."

"If stringent means are necessary to stop this public nuisance," the Reporter concluded, "we believe the good people of Grand Rapids and Centralia are equal to the task."

The campaign for rectitude once again had some effect. In its news from Centralia, the Reporter said, on Nov. 22, 1888: "The house of ill-repute that has blackened the good name of our city was eradicated from our midst in the past week."

Once again, a house at the railroad "Y" of the Green Bay and Western and Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul roads had been host to licentious acts.

On Nov. 17, 1888, a complaint was sworn by Isaac Colson against Ida Hoffel that he "did perceive . . . a certain frame dwelling house, situated in the city of Centralia . . . referred to and known as the 'Y' and kept for a house of ill fame" by Ida Hoffel.

Centralia city marshal W.H. Carey with deputies Nick Thomas and A. Turnbull, assisted by Sheriff Frank Stahl, went to the "Y" and arrested Ida Hoffel, Chas. Hoffel, Barbara Jerance, Frankie Moore, May White, Flo Bean and Jessie Hayes on Nov. 19.

The following day in circuit court, J.W. Cochran, district attorney called witnesses for the state.

Rolland Hall said Ida Hoffel's place on the Vesper road was called the Y house or the Blue Eagle.

Hall had met Hoffel at Charley Williams' house about a week ago. "The baby was sick at Williams and she was there."

Hall said he had heard Ms. Hoffel tell justice of the peace W.H. Getts that she wanted a warrant for a man that she was breaking up her house, a man she called "Redy Sullivan."

Albert Fountaine, publisher of the Wood County Reporter, testified that the general reputation of the Y house was that of a whore house or house of prostitution.

Ed Brundage, publisher of the Centralia Enterprise and Tribune, confirmed the general reputation of the Y house as a house of prostitution.

G.B. Hyde said he had never seen Ida Hoffel but that her house was only 28 rods from his.

"The most that I noticed and saw (was) the women at the house flirting with the men on the R.R. I have heard considerable noise there at different times in the evening and at night time as if there was lots of folks there making a noise and carrying on."

"Some time in the night on Nov. 17, 1888, my wife woke me up and said did you hear that pistol shot and as I woke up I heard one pistol shot fired."

M.H. Carey testified that Ida Hoffel had sent for him as city marshal and asked him to take care of Frank "Redy" Sullivan who had been "raising hell" and had struck her in the face.

Ms. Hoffel had told Carey that she just bought out the house and calculated to run it in a quiet and orderly manner and did not want any such man as that raising hell nor did she want to get abused in her own house.

Isaac Colson testified that he lived 16 rods from the house, which "has been resorted to by a great many persons especially in the day time. I could not say about the night because I do not go out any."

The last witness was Frank Sullivan, who said he had known Ms. Hoffel about six weeks, "ever since she started keeping the house. I have visited the house very near every night and day for the last six weeks for it was the only place to go to have any fun."

"The general reputation of the house was during all this time called a whore house and that is what it is."

Ms. Hoffel pleaded guilty to the crime of keeping a house of ill fame and was sentenced to 1½ years at hard labor in the Wisconsin state prison at Tayceedah.

These were the wages of sin in Centralia.



# Homicide

## COCHRAN'S TESTIMONY:

From across Centralia's Main Street, I could see Rossier's hat and part of his face in Hayden's office door. He looked at me and disappeared. In a minute, he looked again.

Hayden and his pimp, Rossier, came out and stood at the door. They stared at me. I walked by them with my head down. Even though I carried a gun, they jeered at me.

About 30 feet past, I turned, put the shotgun to my shoulder and fired, not caring what I did. Hayden went down.

I returned past them and Rossier said, "What have you done?"

"I have done just what I intended to do."

Dr. Whitney picked up Hayden. The right side of Hayden's coat and vest were shot full of buckshot.

I went back across the bridge from Centralia to J.A. Gaynor's office in Grand Rapids and asked for my brother and the sheriff.

"I have killed Hayden. I could stand it no longer. If a Wood County jury will convict me for that, I am willing to take the consequences."

After I got out on bail, I met Dr. Whitney in front of a saloon. He was very drunk and said he would do the best he could to send me to the state prison.

## THE KILLER:

William H. Cochran, born 1843 in western New York state. Fought in the Union army. Served as a clerk in the War Office. Came to Grand Rapids in April of 1867, where he soon became cashier of the First National Bank.

Having secured a lucrative position, Cochran married in December 1867, a loving lady six years younger than himself. The couple had a daughter in 1870. Their costly new home was called a "domestic paradise."

## THE VICTIM:

There came to Grand Rapids an ambitious young Missouri lawyer, Henry Hayden. A man of splendid physical appearance, intelligence and a plausible and fascinating manner of speech, his abilities soon

won him the position of county judge.

Although he was married to a woman of some talent and was the father of three children, Hayden's manners established him quickly in the good graces of other members of the fairer sex. He boasted that he had seduced half the women of the Congregational Church.

## THE CRIME:

In the autumn of 1878, Hayden began to court Mrs. Cochran, first chatting on the bridge, moving to more intimate conversations at parties and luring her to stroll the by-streets. At the fairgrounds, he raised his hat and smiled, introducing Mrs. Cochran to Mrs. Hayden.

Hayden at length won Mrs. Cochran's consent to meet him at the Centralia school house grounds at a certain log in a shady spot. While engaged in the fulfillment of this tryst, Hayden always laid his revolver aside in position for immediate use, should he and his lover be discovered.

## HER CONFESSION:

At this time, Cochran was occupied not only with bank affairs, but with the running of a shingle mill north of the city. He was absent from early morning until the bank opened and from supper time until after midnight in the woods looking after the shingle mill.

Gossip soon fastened on his wife's reputation and everyone but Cochran himself was aware that the husband had been dishonored, the wife debauched and the marriage bed defiled.

In June 1879, Mrs. Cochran traveled to Minnesota. While she was gone, word came to Cochran that a clandestine correspondence had been going on between his wife and Judge Hayden.

Cochran consulted the postmaster, who confirmed the suspicion and helped him intercept a letter from his wife to Hayden. With that evidence in hand, Cochran telegraphed his wife to come home.

Confronted with the letter, Mrs. Cochran confessed fully. An immediate separation ensued. Mr. Neeves warned Cochran not to go out unarmed, that Hayden was dangerous and went armed himself, that

Hayden sought to put Cochran out of the way soon. Cochran began sleeping with a loaded gun at bedside.

## RESPONSE:

During the next four months, reports continually came to Cochran that Hayden claimed Mrs. Cochran already was a whore when Hayden met her. Mrs. Quimby, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Whitney went to Mrs. Cochran and threatened to send her to Waupun if she confessed her guilt either to Mrs. Hayden or to a committee of the Masonic lodge of which both Hayden and Cochran were members.

Stung by taunts and wrongs, and bewildered by the cruel stings of outrageous fortune, Cochran faced the demon of suicide and saw to it that Rossier's life insurance was canceled.

Sleepless, without appetite, Cochran festered to the extent that a physician diagnosed an epileptoid condition of the brain.

Finally, Hayden purchased the Centralia Enterprise and, in its second issue, on the 9th of October, 1879, published an article ghost-written by Rossier that charged Cochran with unfairness in his bank business. A fictitious name and Auburndale address was signed.

Cochran knew who wrote the article. It was Rossier, the partner of the man who had seduced his wife, broke up his home, pursued him and attempted to destroy public confidence in him. He took his gun to the bank. With the gun in hand, he left for home at 5 p.m.

On the way to Centralia, Cochran stopped on the steps of Garrison and Whittlesey's store and talked with S.N. Whittlesey and G.J. Jackson. He saw Rossier's face in the window.

Rossier and Hayden came on to the sidewalk. Cochran walked by, his head down. He turned, put the gun to his shoulder and fired.

"What have you done?" said Rossier.

Cochran had gunned down a more or less defenseless fellow human in the streets of Centralia. For his action, he was charged with murder. His fate, unlike that of Judge Hayden, would be decided by the court.



## Dazzling the Assemblage

His part in the 1881 campaign that resulted in the election of James A. Garfield as president was hardly over when the celebrated Chicago lawyer, Emery A. Storrs, received a plea to defend an accused murderer up in the Wisconsin pinery.

A bank cashier and sawmill operator, William H. Cochran, had, in a fit of jealous rage, shot his wife's seducer, Judge Henry Hayden. The case had become remarkable not only on account of its sensational details but also because of novel legal questions. Storrs was induced to take up the defense, not for the sake of the fee, which as it happened was never paid in full, but because the injury to the defendant enlisted Storrs' sympathies.

Sympathies in Grand Rapids, the county seat of Wood County, where the shooting had taken place, ran very strong as well. Some desired to revenge Hayden's death but most supported Cochran's action. Consequently, trial was moved to Neillsville, in the adjoining district. Feeling there also ran strongly in Cochran's favor, promoted even further by the eloquence of Storrs.

Commencing on September 6, 1881, the trial lasted 10 days. For the prosecution appeared George L. Williams, Wood County district attorney, Judge George Cate of Stevens Point and J.P.C. Cottrill of Milwaukee. Assisting Storrs for the defense were Charles M. Webb and G.R. Gardner of Grand Rapids. Judge Newman presided.

The attorneys for the state contented themselves with proving that Cochran had gunned down Hayden and thus was obviously guilty of murder. Cottrill alluded to the recent attempt on President Garfield's life and urged the jury to be strict. Without denying that Cochran had shot Hayden, Storrs ridiculed the attempt to parallel Cochran with Garfield's assassin. Using sarcasm, ridicule and pathos, he recited the evidences of Mrs. Cochran's guilt and asked the jurors to treat the case as a question of conscience.

Storrs denounced Hayden's partner, E.B. Rossier, who had authored the "slandorous" article that provoked the killing, calling him "the purveyor of the buzzard and the choreboy of the vulture."

No Wisconsin jury, believed Storrs, would convict a man for doing just what each husband would have done himself.

After several witnesses testified to Cochran's excellent character, Cochran himself took the stand and told in detail the story of his domestic wrong.

A point of dispute arose over the amount of time it took Cochran to get around to killing Hayden. Why had he waited four months after the discovery of the liaison? Thus cooled from the immediate frenzy, Cochran may have acted out of revenge only.

After extreme wrangling, wrote a Grand Rapids newspaper, "the judge is perplexed, the lawyers mixed, and the case virtually at a stand still till legal wind is exhausted, or judicial patience becomes no longer a virtue."

Larger issues further complicated matters. Wisconsin law required that any insanity defense must be set up by a special plea. Storrs addressed Judge Newman on the unconstitutionality of this law. He also asked Newman to instruct the jury that they themselves were judges of the law and not only the facts.

The court ruled, however, against both points.

In Cottrill's closing, he argued that Hayden's criminal intercourse with Mrs. Cochran had not even been proven. He also spoke against the sym-



SWCHC

W.H. Cochran



pathy of the bystanders for the defendant and sneered at what the Rapids newspaper called "the usual complement of aged gossips, prudish old maids and blushing school girls" who had turned out in such force to be titilated. For his part, Storrs recapitulated the sins against the defendant and appealed to the jury as men and husbands to put themselves in Cochran's place. As for women in the courtroom, Storrs said, "Why should they not be here? This case involves questions very near and very dear to them . . . considerations of the sanctity of the marriage relation, of the purity of home, of domestic peace, honor, quiet, and tranquillity, and of the right to repel the invader of either."

Essentially, Storrs argued for a determination of justifiable homicide, his argument clothed in what the Milwaukee Sentinel called "a splendor dazzling to the minds of the assemblage." Storrs told the jury that theirs was the final responsibility and that no human could interfere with that right.

In his charge to the jury, Judge Newman severely disagreed with Storrs, Newman said that there had been no evidence that would place the shooting of Hayden within any bounds of justifiable



Emery A. Storrs

homicide. He told the jury that they might have the power to disregard the law but that they had no right to do so. The law itself provided redress for the wrong done to Cochran, who could not be permitted to wreak his own private vengeance.

Nevertheless, the general sentiment was that Cochran, though guilty in the eyes of the law, was too good a fellow to be punished for procrastinating four months before slaying his wife's paramour.

The jury was out for 24 hours. Four at first hung out for manslaughter with eight for acquittal. Soon the tally was 11 for acquittal and after a sleepless night, the jury returned to the courtroom with the verdict of not guilty.

The public rejoiced. As soon as Cochran came out a free man, the people of Neillsville thronged the streets from the courthouse to the hotel to congratulate him. The ladies improvised an elegant lunch in honor of the jury, of Cochran and of his eloquent counsel. At Merrilan, Cochran, Storrs, and the rest, were greeted with a serenade by the local band. Back home in Grand Rapids waited a torchlight procession.

According to the Chicago Times, "this case furnishes about the only record of a square deliverance without an insanity dodge, so-called." In spite of proof and law, the killer had been acquitted. "It served Hayden right," said the Tomah Journal. "He ought to be shot, as had every despoiler of womanly virtue."

Not everyone agreed. At the trial, there appeared with three children a lady clad in deep mourning, her jet black eyes, her black hair turned prematurely gray, bearing evidence yet of the regal beauty she once possessed, a lady who herself had written, "It is not for me to call upon God to empty the vials of his wrath upon you all who have brought about this great crime."

It was this dark lady who said, "Your punishment is before you. By day and by night it shall follow you.

"You shall see his cold dead face. You shall feel the unseen hand of remorse grasping your heart until your life is done and God shall deal with you Beyond." So wrote this neglected lover—Harriet Hayden, aggrieved widow of the villain and victim, Judge Henry Hayden.



# Fire

H.H. Compton brought a souvenir clock home from Colorado that week in May, 1880. Considering the next few days, he might have wished he'd stayed out west. It began with flood.

On Saturday, the river was so low that fleets of lumber had to tie up for want of water. On Sunday, the water rose six feet and kept rising. On Monday, it still was coming up, the rush bringing with it trees, stumps, and logs in immense quantities.

Cellars of business houses began to take water. Ingraham & Co., Morrill's meat market, and Brundage & Ferguson were being drowned out. Spafford & Cole were busy taking up goods from their cellar.

For a while, it seemed gloomy indeed. The Valley and Green Bay railroads couldn't get through. The telegraph line was out. "The Wisconsin River and all its tributaries are up higher than they were ever known before since the advent of civilization. Dams, booms and bridges have been driven before the torrents," said a June, 1880, Grand Rapids Tribune. "The loss to lumbermen and farmers had been great, and beyond an estimate. Railroad companies and municipal corporations have suffered immense losses from the floating off of bridges, culverts and turnpikes."

Daly & Sampson lost 200,000 logs. John Edwards lost about 500,000 feet of logs that passed under the boom and 1½ million more when the boom gave way. When 1½ million feet of logs slipped out of Wausau booms, Francis Biron was telegraphed to catch them. "Never in the recollection of our people has there been so rapid a rise and so dangerously high, sweeping everything before it," said the Wood County Reporter of June 10, 1880.

In front of the Rablin House, water had come up into the street to the depth of about two feet. By Wednesday, the water had about spent its force and was falling slowly.

Now was time for fire.

The Rablin House was the Rapids' finest, a hotel built in 1869 by John Rablin, then proprietor of a sawmill on 1st Street North. It stood at the junction of Baker and 1st streets, erected before the railroad had reached Grand Rapids, at a cost of \$20,000.

It may have been too grand for its town. Rablin sold out soon enough. The new owners and the new

manager found it difficult to turn a profit.

On May 8, 1880, posters circulated, advertising the furniture of the big Rablin House hotel for sale at public auction. On May 22, the hotel was expected to close. The Grand Rapids Tribune wrote: "Our citizens generally will regret that Mr. Clarke has decided to leave us, and that this magnificent house is to be closed. But we are assured that Mr. Clarke has been unable to make the business pay for some time past. The owners of the house have some way become impressed that it is worth a small fortune, and will neither sell at a reasonable price nor rent at living figures."

The same day, the Tribune reported the Rablin House and barn had a narrow escape from fire on the previous Monday night. "Either a brand carelessly dropped, or a match purposely touched, ignited in the slabs that form the foundations for the house and barn."

On May 22, the Tribune had some sinister news. Col. B.E. Clarke, of the Rablin House, had received a letter with a Centralia postmark, threatening the destruction of the Rablin House by fire.

Clarke said that a penniless tramp had begged breakfast. Clarke meant to feed him, "until he became impudent and put on a good many independent airs, whereupon breakfast was denied him."

Thus rebuked, the tramp threatened revenge.

"Our community happens to be so unfortunate as to be incumbered by a class of men whose conduct is such that it invites and lends encouragement to the visitations of tramps, whose sole business and occupation is to rob and plunder," lamented the Tribune.

Despite the forebodings, "the most enjoyable social event of the season" took place at the Rablin House in late May. "The spacious living room was cleared of such rubbish as tables and chairs, and lively feet kept time with the excellent music furnished by Rigg's string band."

On June 5, the Rablin House still was in business, having "a good run of custom. Travel seems to be on the increase, and the Rablin is getting the lion's share."

A week later, at about 3 a.m. on a Saturday, a traveling man by the name of "E.B. Clarke," according to the Wood County Reporter, discov-