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From *The Columbus Democrat.*

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March 3, 1871

# THE PORTAGE AND FORT WINNEBAGO.

Primeval Times Along the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers.

Some Memorable Events in the Early History of Wisconsin.

Pioneer Scenes, Adventures and Reminiscences.

[From the Columbus Democrat.]

Conquest approached the Mississippi in the mailed persons of De Sota and his six hundred professional soldiers, when in 1542 adventure led them arrayed in all the glitter and bravery of medieval war across the great artery of the new world. The boundless and unknown West yet lay in the unworn sheen of its freshness, new from the manufacturing hand of nature. Legend made gold the woof of this virgin land and scattered diamonds over it in more than oriental profusion. De Sota and his horde came as despoilers of this fabled treasure and to plant banners of Old Spain over new possessions.

Christianity made its benign progress to the Great River, personified in the coarsely garbed form of Father Marquette, with the cross in his hand and words of peace upon his lips. He emerged from the shoaly solitudes of the Wisconsin, June 17th, 1673, and floated into that vast stream which divides almost a continent, to fill the silence raying upon its current with the news of revealed salvation.

Ten vessels of war landed upon the southern coast, De Sota and his squadron. Two frail canoes bore Marquette and his party. De Sota is the type of royal and knightly power. Marquette represented a victory in which force is no element. One half of De Sota's gleaming cohort left their skeletons scattered from Georgia to Arkansas, in the fastnesses, on the mountains, and in the morasses of the country they thought to subjugate. The returning moiety bore defeat and disappointment upon their stained helmets. They accomplished nothing beyond the rooting of a hatred and bitterness between the white and the native which a century could scarcely eliminate. There was fearlessness in the gentle Marquette, and something of that enthusiasm which so commands our respect in the career of St. Paul. But he conquered savages by his mildness and piety. Hostility knelt to his meekness and the faith he had in his mission. A thousand churches and schools pointing to the Heaven, in whose

rest he now is, from the path of his wanderings through these forests, are the ensigns of his conquest.

The kingdom of those early disciples of Loyola was not bounded by nationality. They planted the cross in many a wilderness and on many an arduous mountain.— But they erected the Lilies of the Bourbons never.

### THE AGE OF OUR STATE.

The history of the white man in Wisconsin may be said to date from Marquette's ascent of the Fox river, transit of the portage, and descent of the Wisconsin, although it is reported that Allouez founded a mission at Green Bay 1669. There is reason for surprise at the antiquity of this era in territory so far westward. At this period, a hundred years before our revolution, settlements on the Atlantic coast was only just approaching permanency. England and Holland were yet at war to decide the possession of embryo New York. The Pilgrims had landed not half a century previous.— Old Virginia, scarcely emerged from the rigorous days of Captain John Smith, was yet boasting that she was the last to yield submission to Cromwell and first to return to kingly allegiance under Charles II. Philadelphia was scarcely founded. The earliest settlements were just taking root in the Carolinas; and the cow-paths to become the streets of Boston proper were yet undefined. The Hudson even was a river only a generation old in the knowledge of the European.

### MARQUETTE'S EXPLORATIONS IN WISCONSIN.

This journey of Marquette is particularly a local event in Columbia county. It is within its limits that these rivers seek to unite. The famous portage of the missionary is an environ of its county seat, whose municipal name is thus derived. The writer stood a few days since upon the narrow neck between the rivers, and from the newly-built depot of still another railroad looked intently over the historic spot. Portage looks its best from this suburb, and has the aspect of a city larger than it is. The white towers of the ship canal catch the eye and show the course of steamers across the ancient transit. While we looked and thought, three passenger trains, with the noisy tremor of artificial life swept over it within a few minutes of each other. In the cold brightness the steam coiled itself horizontally in white, continuous sinuosity above and the length of the coaches, the gigantic respiration of a monster. The guileless but undaunted Marquette might naturally have mistaken these hissy phenomena for the demons the natives had told him possessed the lower waters and engulfed, canoe and all, whoever sought to explore them. This, then, is the very spot where this persevering pioneer of Christianity compelled his way. In the mind's eye one can see him in his humble

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Jesuistic habit, with his six *compagnons du voyage*, bearing their rude canoes through the tangled wild rice seeking westward for the unknown river, and guided by the towering bluffs past which the river breaks; the first of a giant chain of such, immovable, conveying it to the Mississippi.

Epochs meet in this narrow pass. Its transit then and now and the contrast are a registry of the pace civilization has kept in the interim.

#### THE FIRST PORTAGE.

There are no copious records of that first journey across the Wisconsin. For five years previous Father Marquette had been at the strait of Mackinaw and Sault St. Marie, where he founded the first French settlement within the limits of the United States. Becoming possessed by the purpose of exploring the Great River, of which vague accounts were given by the natives, he determined to execute it. M. Joliet, a French gentleman, and former resident of Quebec, five French voyagers, and two Indian guides accompanied him from the strait. Crossing Lake Michigan, as it is now named, they made their way down the Bay of Paunts, Foetid Bay, or Green Bay, as it is now called, into the Fox river. Marquette speaks of this stream as very beautiful at its mouth, flowing gently; full of bustard, duck, teal and other birds, attracted by the wild rice. A little further up it became very difficult on account of the currents and the sharp rocks which cut the canoes and the feet of those who were obliged to draw them, especially when the water was low. On his progress he refers to an Indian village, termed Machkoutens, where dwelt the Five Nations. Near here he drank the mineral waters of the river, and was shown an indigenous herb whose root is to this day an antidote to the bite of serpents. Allusion is also made to a village which he termed Maskutons, three leagues from a river that they knew emptied into the Mississip, as he spelt it. They knew their course to this stream was south southwest. He describes the way as so cut up by marshes and little lakes that it was easy to go astray, and the river leading to it as being so covered with wild oats as almost to conceal the channel. "Hence," he says, "we had good need of our two guides, who led us safely to a portage of 2,700 paces, helped us to transport our canoes to enter the river; after which they returned, leaving us alone in an unknown country, in the hands of Providence." Thus briefly does the father describe the first passage of the neck of land destined to such importance in the hereafter. He narrates that before embarking to leave the waters flowing towards Quebec, 400 or 500 leagues away, to follow those leading to strange lands, they all began together a special invocation to the immaculate Virgin particularly asking her protection for their persons and her aid in the success of their voyage. Then mutually encouraging each other they stepped into their canoes. He describes the Wisconsin

very broad, with a sandy bottom with many shallows and difficult of navigation; full of vine-clad islets, and bordered by fertile lands diversified with wood, prairie and hill. Roebucks and buffaloes abounded, and indications of iron along the shores are mentioned. Earlier writers say that no fish live in the Wisconsin (a very great mistake); and it is recorded that Marquette in his descent saw no aborigines or their habitations; though he does not so state. He reached the long river June 17th, and as one writer says, France and Christianity stood in the valley of the Mississippi.

#### WISCONSIN.

The name of the river from which our state obtained its designation has been varied more than once. The Chippewas called it Weo-kon-san, "The Gathering of the Waters." Marquette's orthography was Mekonsing, or Mesconsin. Hennepin was the first to write it Ouisconsin, and it was long so designated by the French voyageurs, and so appeared in the earlier maps as late as territorial. The subsequent mutation of the initial letter to W has produced a most musical word, which yet retains its former poetry.

#### HENNEPIN AT THE PORTAGE.

La Salle, in his exploration of the Illinois river to the Mississippi, when near the mouth of the former, detached from his party Anthony Auguel, surnamed the Picard Du Gay, Michal Ako and Louis Hennepin, with directions to ascend the latter. They started on the 28th of February, 1680, and reached the Falls of St. Anthony of Padua, as Hennepin named that cataract. There they were captured by the Sioux. Subsequently they were liberated by a trader named St. Luth, and in September of the same year returned to Quebec, going up the Wisconsin, making the portage, and descending the Fox to Green Bay. Thus father Hennepin was the first European to penetrate the Mississippi above the Wisconsin, and the second across the portage.

#### SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

As early as 1718 the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, and the intervening neck, were known as one of the three great routes from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi. Doubtless it is not entirely destitute of history in the intervening time. But the writer obtains no facts regarding that period. Had the Indian possessed a written language and preserved archives, there would be no lack of stirring annals. The warlike Foxes and other of the native tribes, we may not doubt annually made bloody history along these rivers. If one could have gathered the tradition of aboriginal braves that faded as its repositories degenerated, he would find satiety of tragedy in the scenes of our present homes. And there would be no need to read in dead languages of ancient butcheries on other continents.

It is of record that in 1728 400 French and about 900 Indians, under Monsieur de Lignerie, went up the Fox to its head, de-

stroying along its banks all the villages and cornfields of the unfriendly Foxes, and burning one old Indian captive at slow torture. This mode of obtaining reliable war news has gone out of fashion since the laying of the Atlantic cable, and will probably not be renewed.

In 1766 Capt. John Carver voyaged from Green Bay to the Mississippi by the Fox and Wisconsin rivers and their portage; thence to the falls of St. Antony, where he claimed to have obtained from the Indians the immense tract of land famous as the Carver Grant.

#### GRIGNON'S RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PORTAGE.

Sieur Augustin de Langdale and his son Charles are held to be the pioneer settlers of Wisconsin. The elder was of a family of French nobles, and was born in 1695. The new world was at that period the great theater for adventurous spirits who had their way to win, and Langdale came to Canada at an early age. The first that is known of him he was among the Ottawas at Mackinaw about 1729. He was undoubtedly with De Lignerie in his expedition against the Foxes in 1728. He married the sister of king Nisso-wa-quet, or La Fourche. The Fork, as the French called him, the principal chief of the Ottawas. Augustin Grignon was his lineal descendant. Born at Green Bay, June 27th, 1780, he became a trader under the American Fur Company, and like a few other French and half-breeds, cultivated a little land at Green Bay. Until recently, he was living at Butte de Morts; and, for aught this writer knows, is still on this planet. There are but few well authenticated instances of the decease of that old French and Indian blood. Grignon's portrait may be observed in the rooms of the Historical Society, at Madison. His "Seventy-two years' Recollections of Wisconsin" are the most interesting personal statement to which we have been able to gain access. Grignon relates that a trader from Mackinaw, named Laurent Barth, wintered on the St. Croix river in 1792-3, with Jaques Porlier and Charles Reume. On his return in the spring, Barth, with his family, stopped at the portage and obtained from the Winnebagoes the right to transport goods, etc., across that carry. On his arrival he built a cabin at the portage; but finding that locality was occasionally submerged, he removed the next year to the high ground above. Grignon dates the settlement here to Barth's coming. Shortly afterwards, the elder De Kaury, a French trader, made his appearance from Lake Puckaway and founded the Indian settlement on the Wisconsin two miles above the portage. Others followed, and it grew to comparative size and importance.

The next white resident at the portage was Jean Lecuyer, a brother-in-law of De Kaury, and he stopped there in 1798. Competition and improvement are not a thing of to-day only. Lecuyer, too, gained permission of the Winnebagoes to transport goods. Barth had used but a single horse and cart. But Lecuyer brought several teams and

cars, with the addition of a wagon constructed with a long reach to transport barges between the rivers. About 1803 Mr. Campbell, later the first Indian agent at Prairie du Chien, purchased Barth's right. Shortly afterward he sold his fixtures to Lecuyer, who supposed that he was relinquishing the business. But he placed his son John, and afterward his son Duncan, at the east end of the portage. Barth removed to Prairie du Chien and died there at the opening of the war of 1812. Campbell was killed in a duel in 1808. Lecuyer died in 1810. His widow continued the transportation business through the agency of Laurent Filly until the British war broke out. Filly was a native of Mackinaw, and his mother was a sister of De Kaury. He was located here for several years, but finally died at Grand Kau-kau-lin in the autumn of 1846, aged 83, vigorous and unbowed to the last. About that time Francis Roy, a son of Joseph Roy, of Green Bay, became her son-in-law, and carried on the business for many years. — Lockwood, in his narrative of "Early Times and Events in Wisconsin," speaks of Roy as at the portage in 1817, and mentions that he charged fifty cents a hundred and \$10 a boat for carrying goods, furs, etc, one and one-fourth miles across. After the war of 1812 Joseph Rolette engaged in transportation here, employing Pierre Poquette as manager. Grignon himself spent two winters at this point in 1801 and 1802, and Jaques Porlier early passed two or three.

#### EARLY TRADE.

During the years of which we have been writing, the portage was a point of some consequence as a trading post. Barth kept no goods for sale to the Indians after he had disposed of the remnant of stock which he brought from the St. Croix; but Lecuyer always kept a considerable variety. His widow, and, after her, Roy had smaller quantities, and Campbell sold goods during one year.

In 1814 Colonel McKay, of the British army, came up the Fox from Green Bay with a large force of whites and Indians, crossed the portage, descended the Wisconsin and captured the present site of Prairie du Chien. And this crossing is associated with the last war against Great Britain by other events.

In 1818 William Farnsworth, who subsequently resided at Sheboygan, accompanied by twenty others, traveled from Green Bay to St. Louis by these rivers and the Mississippi.

Ebenezer Childs records making the same trip in a bark canoe in 1821. He conducted the first Durham boat that ever went up the Fox and over the portage.

In 1826 a flotilla of 35 boats carried the 3d United States Infantry from Green Bay to St. Louis by the same streams and crossings.

In 1827 General Cass passed over this route to ascertain the feeling among the Winnebagoes.

In 1828 Governor Doty, then Judge, went

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from Green Bay to Prairie du Chien by this route, accompanied by a United States marshal. The purpose of his trip was to hold a court for the trial of certain Indians accused of murder.

In the spring of 1819 Colonel Leavenworth, with a detachment of troops, left Detroit and proceeded, via Green Bay, the Fox, the portage and the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers, to the site of Fort Snelling. — There he began the construction of those heavy buildings which were afterwards occupied by the military, and which are yet standing.

The residents of Portage City who remember Ebenezer Child, are full of reminiscences regarding the old man. He was a sturdy veteran, full of the determination of which heroes are made. He has given us some interesting details of early life in Wisconsin; among them some incidents relating to the portage, whither he very often came.

#### ABORIGINAL UNDERTAKING.

He records a unique mode of interment there more than fifty years ago. Chou-garah, or The Ladle, son of De Kaury, was the principal chief of the Winnebagoes. — He died at the portage, in 1808, at a great age. According to a solemn request in his last hours, he was placed after death in his coffin in a sitting posture, and was left so adjusted on the surface of the ground, a cabin, surrounded by a fence, having been built over him. The expiring Ladle protested against being dipped into the earth.

Robert Irwin was the first member elected from the west side of Lake Michigan to the Michigan territorial legislature, and served two terms; the tract now comprising our state being known as the Huron district of Michigan. He was subsequently appointed Indian agent for the Winnebagoes; was stationed at the fort of that name about 1828, and died there, and was taken to Green Bay for interment. He was the first justice of the peace and clerk of the court west of Lake Michigan, having been appointed under Michigan authority. About 1821 he was appointed the first postmaster in what is now Wisconsin. His oldest daughter, Mrs. Mary G. Mitchell, of Green Bay, was the first American child born within the limits of our state.

#### CAPTURE OF RED BIRD.

Early in 1827 the Winnebagoes manifested indications of hostility. They committed various depredations: fired into boats upon the river, and attacked in force a keel-boat upon the Mississippi between Prairie du Chien and Fort Snelling. And finally they murdered the members of two peaceable families near the former point. The secretary of war ordered the troops to arrest the perpetrators. There was then only a small force of regulars at Green Bay, and general Dickinson and Childs raised a company of sixty-two Stockbridge and Oneida Indians. They were mustered with the detachment of regulars under colonel Whist-

ler at Little Butte des Morts. Old Ebenezer had enlisted a washer-woman to cleanse the linen of his recruits and the regret he felt when the colonel refused to muster her in is on record. The party slowly made their way up the Fox in boats and canoes. Childs being in advance mounted on a canoe doing as a vidette. They arrived at the portage with their scalps on, which comfortable fact they deemed worthy of mention. They encamped upon the high ground where the fort was built the succeeding year. The Winnebagoes several hundred strong were in camp a few hundred yards away where Portage is now located, being determined to give battle rather than surrender the murderers. Affairs remained in this posture for several days. Presently intelligence was received that general Atkinson with a considerable force was coming up the Wisconsin. The alert savages became possessed of this news first; and a great stir was visible in their encampment, accompanied by shouting and dancing. Soon thirty warriors left the main body and advanced towards the force of the whites. Childs who was officer of the guard was ordered to take a detachment and learn what the Winnebagoes proposed to do. They advanced singing and shouting their doleful death-song, and finally said they had concluded to yield up the criminals, pointing out three. The principal of these was a noted chief, handsomely dressed in white-tanned buffalo, and known as Red Bird for having a preserved bird of that color on each shoulder as an epaulet. The three were taken to Prairie du Chien and convicted before Judge Doty. Red Bird died in confinement. The other two were pardoned by the president. The original document with the signature of J. Q. Adams is to be seen in the rooms of the Historical Society.

#### MAJOR DICKASON AT THE PORTAGE.

This same year major Dickason made his first appearance in this country, being called hither, no doubt, by the Indian difficulties above alluded to. His arrival was probably earlier in the season. He came with a party of mounted scouts from the Illinois country, reaching the present site of the village of Columbus. Following the highlands he struck Duck Creek somewhere near Wyocena where he afterward lived and was buried. He affected a crossing with his troop without leaving any trail of hoof, and that night conducted his party to the spot where the City Hotel at Portage now is. He concealed them there in a depression of the ground and remained during the greater part of the night. In the darkness he closely approached the elevation where the fort was afterward built, and had a near view of a large party of Winnebagoes who were rending the quiet of the night with the wild and noisy gyrations of the war dance. He crept back to the rendezvous and before daybreak the whole par-

ty were on their return without having been discovered. It was this excursion which led the major subsequently, in 1832 we think, to settle in this county when he built the first and for a long time the only cabin in the vicinity of Columbus. Dickson used to insist that the battalion which major Dodge commanded in the Black Hawk war properly belonged to him, and would have been led by him but for his illness.

#### THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

During the first year of his residence in this county, the savages occasionally familiarized themselves unduly with his property and converted it sometimes. One fall he had a great pile of corn which he carefully watched. With all his vigilance he could see no signs of its locomotion. When he came to remove it, however, it was as hollow as a honey-comb and tumbled in at almost the first touch. The Indians had stealthily and gradually carried it away, at the same time propping it up carefully, to keep up appearances. On one occasion three of them purloined some valuable skins he had seasoning. The major was perhaps the best woodsman who ever frequented these wilds. It is said of him that when he had his moccasins on, no human being ever saw him first in the woods. He followed the trail of the fur thieves so noiselessly that he was close upon them without their knowledge. Supposing themselves beyond danger they were in high glee over their capture, and were uproarously mirthful at his expense. Suddenly he thrust his foot from behind a tree in their immediate rear and cracked a dry twig. Startled at his appearance they dropped their booty and fled. He did not want to kill either of them, because in that case the whole tribe would be likely to return and take summary vengeance on him in his solitary cabin. He determined to give them a lesson, and followed them closely with rifle and revolver; as they crouched rapidly from tree to tree, he fired a shot as near as possible without hitting, first at the ear of one and then of the other, leading the liveliest imaginable dance for some miles, without a moment of safety.

"NO GOOD."

Judge Guppy mentions that the first time he ever saw him was at Columbus. He had hung up his rifle in a store and gone out temporarily. A couple of dusky possessors of the original soil came in, and at once knew the redoubtable weapon. They grunted "Ough! major Dickson; no good," and decamped at once. Indeed the Indians learned to hold the hardy old pioneer in very salutary fear, and never were really anxious to cement a close intimacy with him.

#### FORT WINNEBAGO CEMETERY.

In a thick wood of small oaks perhaps a quarter of a mile eastward from the fort along military road is the old Fort Winnebago depository after the lasting muster out. It is a lonely spot, and when the wri-

ter visited it, seared by a double winter; that of the year and of abandonment and neglect. About one hundred persons were planted here to await the re-germination of the resurrection. It was the cemetery of the early village which clustered around the fort. A number of soldiers went here below the thunder of the morning and evening gun and the disturbing clatter of reveille tattoo. Their graves are undistinguishable now; though once the summits of their head-boards were decked with black paint, a distinction which their country gave them that they might not be confounded with the civilians sleeping about them. The names of major Clark and captain Gideon Low appeared in this roll-call of death. Their remains however, were removed, those of the latter officer were laid in the cemetery at Portage City. Indeed empty sepulchres are frequent on every hand. It is observable that most of the undistinguished tenants of these tombs are women: Doubtless they become domiciled after the manner of the sex and afterward could not be spared from home as well. The condition of the place show that all care for it is dead too, or removed to an impracticable distance. The summer fires leaping through the dry thicket have burned and half burned at will the picketed enclosures about many graves, and the years have met success in their endeavors to raze and bury even the memorials of other burials. Your inadvertant foot each minute throws up excellently seasoned chips in memory of somebody whose name old time prefers you should not read. Boastful, perennial eternal Fame is after all but the serf and prey of this old grub among the epitaphs, build how you will.

Cooper Pixley, a soldier of the revolution went to sleep in these grounds, aged 86 yrs. and 7 mo's. His grave is still undisturbed.

March 10. 1871.

#### [SECOND PAPER.]

[From the Columbus Democrat.]

#### COLONEL WHITTLESEY'S TOUR.

Colonel Charles Whittlesey, of Eagle Harbor, Lake Superior, in his "Recollections of a Tour Through Wisconsin, in 1832," has recorded some details of a trip up the Fox and a short stay at the fort. He traveled in company with a two horse carriage, and mentions accomplishing two-hundred and fifty miles during the last two and a half days before reaching the fort. The concluding fifty miles were along rolling prairies, over which the vehicle passed without meeting obstructions, other than an occasional marsh. On the right of their track, as he says, lay at irregular distances the river and the "Opauka" or rice lakes were distinctly seen as they rose the swells of the

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country. He speaks of the garrison at the portage on a handsome rise overlooking the immediate valley of both streams, which he alludes to as a meadow about half a mile across, over which the waters of both streams mingle in time of a flood, floating boats from the valley of the Mississippi to the valley of the great lakes. Whittlesey refers to the navigability of the Wisconsin for steam-boats at that time; but remarks that it was filled with shifting bars from the portage to its mouth. Traveled roads then extended to Prairie du Chien.

#### THE BLACK HAWK WAR

was in progress at this period, and Winnebago was one of its objective points. On the 10th of July in the same year generals Henry and Alexander and major Dodge with their commands were sent to this fort to supply themselves with provisions. At the same general Atkinson himself, who was in command of the whole force, moved toward Lake Koshkonong, where he erected the fort which bore his name and gave designation to the village. The three commanders did not agree in their construction and execution of the orders by which they were to rejoin Atkinson. The misunderstanding and consequent disagreement in movement led to a controversy that was warm afterward. That was a point in our history when events were considered important which grow very insignificant in the light of subsequent military events on this continent.

#### EARLY SCENERY AND CUSTOMS.

The prospects from these green hills rising from the Fox and surmounted by the snowy fabrics of the fort was then varied and even magnificent. The clear, fish-peopled streams in the foreground rippling its adieus before its departure for St. Lawrence. Not a league away, the discolored currents of the Wisconsin beginning their descent to southern waters. The whole view was comprised within an amphitheater of some miles of blue hills and brown or green as the season or the changing day shifted along them. The marshy intervening district rank with vegetation and by its occasional overflows at times rendering the whole United States east of the Mississippi, one vast island. We know that the pioneers of a region are wont to believe and maintain in later years that its beauty has declined, as the graces and color of their own youth have faded. But we must believe something of their stories of whole townships wearing a rich fragrant coat of wild clover unbroken by fence or enclosure; hut or barn-yard. And we cannot deny that summer never looked more ornately on these expanses than when no hand but that of nature had ever been on them. When the hurrying feet of man and the pride of his loud inventions had not worn the wild flowers from their garments, nor scarred and seamed and corrugated the fresh, heavy sward upon the slopes and plains. When the debris of civilization had not gathered along the wa-

ter-courses, nor soiled the hills and swept their ornaments away. We may believe, too, as they tell us, that the few denizens and chance wanderers were influenced by their inartificial surroundings, and had less of conventionality and sham in their composition and habits than the dwellers in the centers of population. And that more would be learned in a half hour of the characters and business of an individual met on horse-back on a distant trail, than would be told by years of residence in the same portion of a city. This, however, is not to be taken as wrestling any laurels from those experts who make themselves masters of the details of village life. Where ye bound? followed by interchange of hydraulic operations upon the capacious receptacles which all then carried suspended externally from the shoulder. Thus the avenues to information would be opened and improved.

#### A PRIMITIVE SALUTATION.

Apropos of those unexpected meetings, we have another little episode in the life of major Dickason which we may as well relate here:

Mr. George Bartholomew, afterward of Lodi, was among the first men to arrive in this county. He and the major had been warm friends in their youth, and the former had stood best-man at the wedding of the latter. Both were full of enterprise, and loved to explore the great west and feel themselves free from the carping annoyance of close association with their species. They had lost all the knowledge of each other's whereabouts, and probably did not know that they were so near each other as to be both within the territory of "Ouisconsin." Bartholomew was great in the hunting of bees. He knew their habits like a printed page. The whole country was his apiary. Years afterward he would go a hundred miles in quest of the treasures of these workers in the blossom. On this occasion he was on a similar expedition, and had arrived somewhere in the woods of what is now Dekorra. Following his bee line, all at once he became aware that a distant human figure was watching him intently. Deeds of violence might be done in those lonely confines without any further application of the rules of evidence, and he immediately put himself in a posture of defense. The descried figure did likewise. And so they warily approached each other, rifle in hand, waiting for some demonstration to indicate the character of the meeting. At last the nearing hunter threw down his rifle, and sent up a sudden shout that might have startled the phlegmatic trees from their steadfast dignity. It was the old major. His keen eye had recognized at that distance and in his trappings, the friend he had not seen for so long. Without waiting to remove kid gloves, the two woodsmen were in each other's arms, and had a hearty hug there in those solitudes, with not another human being within miles of them to smile at their disregard of fashionable salutation.

THE ERECTION AND GARRISON OF FORT  
WINNEBAGO.

The few old residents about Portage who remember Fort Winnebago during its garrison love to dwell upon its halcyon days and will suspend their occupation to talk of it when it was the one spot for many miles enlivened by a resemblance to civilized life. But they sigh with regret when its present status is mentioned, and say they never care to see it now.

As we have shown, there was here at the beginning of the century an Indian village frequented by French and half-breed traders. The military power of France, England and the United States had been faintly exercised in succession at Green Bay for a long period. About 1828, however, became visible the first faint undulation of that billow of immigration which afterward submerged the whole Northwest, and populated no state faster than Wisconsin. The necessity of a garrison nearer the center of the territory became evident for the protection of the settlers; the exercise of government jurisdiction over the Indians, and the guarding of stores and munitions for the villages to be founded along the river. By reason of its advantages for transportation, and its central position the high point at the easterly end of the portage was selected as the permanent location. Tradition makes it the exact spot where Marquette erected the cross. Major David Twiggs, afterward of Mexican fame and later still of rebellious infamy, commanded the first detachment here, which consisted of three companies of the 1st United States infantry. The officers then under him were captain Spencer and Beale and captain William S. Harney, who afterward gained laurels in Mexico, and finally became a major general. The lieutenants of his command were Jefferson Davis; Gaines Miller; Abercrombie; who commanded at Falling Waters early in the rebellion, and who rose to rank as a general officer, being the son-in-law of general Patterson of Philadelphia; Pegram, afterward a general in the Southern army, who was captured early in the war by general McClellan; Lamotte, and Sidney Burbank, now also a general. The medical staff consisted of surgeon Abbott.

The fort was completed in 1828, under the supervision of the commandant and his officers. This work was done principally by soldiers, very little outside assistance being required. It is said that Jefferson Davis developed in his youth here a taste and skill in cabinet making that promised much better results than he attained when exercising this faculty as a bogus President. The comfort and appearance of the apartments were much enhanced by his ingenuity. Specimens of his handiwork in furniture are still extant in this country. Much of the architectural ornament and external finish of the place was also attributed to his superintendence.

The principal buildings of the fort were

erected on the side of a square. Defense against cannon never entered into the plan. The only structures in the fortifications were two compact but heavy block-houses perforated for musketry, and situated at the north-east and south-west corner of the quadrangle. At the same corner was the magazine, a low arched structure of heavy stone. A little south and across the military road from Ft. Howard, which was subsequently laid, were the hospital and the quarters of the medical staff; still a little south of which were the carpenter shops. Westward on the slope toward the river was a large building used by the commissary department, near which was the cynosure of the sutler. The capacious stables were not many rods away, and just removed from them was the slaughter houses. Forty rods east the black smith shops are only just discernable. On the northern and southern sides of the fort itself were the gardens which became highly cultivated. The drill and parade ground was east of it. When first erected a solid picket of stockade enclosed it. There were two entrances each guarded by thick double gates. Thus it will be seen that in proper repair and garrison Winnebago might sustain quite a formidable attack. The buildings of the fort proper were neat one and a half story edifices, painted white, with sharply sloping roofs and uniform dormer windows, clean and tasty of aspect.

TWIGGS RELIEVED.

On the 5th of July 1831 the command of major Twiggs was relieved by the companies of C. D. E. and F. of the 6th U. S. Infantry. The officers of these companies were as follows, respectively: Captains Nathan Clark, Gideon Low, Plympton and F. Hunt. Lieutenants, Alexander, Center, Alex. S. Hooe, Conners, Kirby Smith, H. P. Van Cleave and Alexander Johnson. Captain Plympton who brevet major assumed command for a short time until the arrival of Colonel Enos Cutter. The subsequent commanders during any considerable period were major John Green, colonel McIntosh, captain Low and Jewett, and lieutenant Mumford. Two companies of the 1st subsequently relieved this detachment and remained until the evacuation. Among the officers not enumerated above who were at some time on duty here were Edward M. Lacey, M. D. McKissack, Joseph Whipple, Robert Granger, Masten, Haymann, Arthur, R. E. Marcy, Pinkney Layenbeel, and Camillus C. Davis, who is a brother-in-law of Van Cleave. Old Zack Taylor himself, who was for a long time stationed at Fort Crawford, or Prairie du Chien was once ordered here by general Brooke when he commanded the military department from Fort Howard to the Mississippi. It was the thunder of the fort guns that first announced the death of the soldier president to many residents of Columbia county. The 8th Infantry commanded by colonel Worth, the peer of any officer that went to Mexico was stationed here for recruiting purposes. Satter-

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lee Clark, so long the senator from Dodge county, was appointed sutler here in the first year of the post by general Cass as a secretary of war. Clark was only fifteen years old, and another party was the nominal appointee. It is said that Mr. Henry Merrell, the oldest resident of Portage, was also a sutler here. He knows more about earlier times in that vicinity than any other living man. Unfortunately we did not see him. We saw, however, a little urchin at play among a group of school children whom they told us was among his latter born. Good stock in those old pioneers. Lieutenants Plummer, Masten and Haymann of the garrison each married a sister of senator Clark, whose father had been a major in the service.

#### DISTINGUISHED NAMES.

The history of the United States could not be written without the names of not a few who did duty at this post, and many of them are distinguished ones. Harney, Twiggs, Abercrombie, Pegram, Burbank, Van Cleve, Granger, Plummer, Haymann, Lagenbeel and Marcy, whose daughter McClellan subsequently married, all became wearers of general officers' stars, some of them in the regular army. Two gained that bad eminence on the wrong side of the rebellion. Van Cleve had a command at the battle of Fort Fisher. Colonel McIntosh died gallantly at Molino del Rey, in Mexico.

#### GARRISON AMUSEMENTS.

The anatomical mower with the hour-glass was not a frequent spectre at the fort. Time does not appear to have hung heavily on the garrison. There was much leisure for amusement and they improved it. They had billiard tables; home manufactured, but of good quality. There were nightly games of pool, as well as cut-throat loo, euchre, seven-up, poker, and whatever other speculations are practicable on those fascinating parallelograms of spotted pasteboard. That passion, which is said to be the child of avarice and the parent of despair, held high riot here under the cloak of discipline. The destination of the payments was generally decided before the stated visits of the paymaster in a manner which, in point of fact, greatly varied the expressed design of the roll. There were orgies and frolics of all sorts. Often Bacchus temporarily relieved Mars. Sometimes the powers of darkness came in response to frequent summons. There was no end of horse-racing on the natural courses, without the enclosures. Garrison balls were also among the recreations. At one period the mail arrived once in every two weeks from Chicago by the way of the Mineral Point country. The vehicle which brought it hove in sight upon a height three miles distant from the fort. It was a favorite pastime to lay wagers on the moment of its descryal; the precise moment it would reach the post-office, which was the sutler's store-house; or whether the wagerer would have a letter or not.— Game was abundant in its season, and many

days were devoted to the pleasures of the hunt. In the season there were sleighing parties also. Colonel McIntosh was very fond of this diversion. The garrison used to cut its own wood, and it is said that in his time about the only practicable drive was out to government wood-piles and return.

#### FORT SCHOOLS.

Education in this State commenced at these forts, as is worthy of note. The first attempts at tuition, except in the faintest way in private families, was initiated at forts Howard, Winnebago and Crawford. There were established what were called "post schools," which were under the superintendence of the commandants. They afforded instruction to the children of the officers and soldiers and some of neighboring residents. In 1835, when Major Green commanded at Fort Winnebago, Miss Eliza Haight was governess in his family, and instructed about a dozen children of the garrison. In 1840, Rev. S. P. Keyes became chaplain and schoolmaster of the post, and taught twenty children, some of them more than twelve years old.

#### THE VOYAGEUR.

In the fort days the Fox, adjacent to Winnebago, had not its present deserted air. There were warehouses along its margin, and batteaux in its waters. The French voyageur who manned these flat-boats is a character unknown now, though his type exists always. Gay, devil-may-care, improvident and free-hearted, he was a sort of Rip Van Winkle, with just a sufficient ingredient of the beast of burden to make him of service. They were hired at Quebec or Montreal, for a term of two or three years, at \$100 or \$150 per annum, and an outfit consisting of a Mackinaw blanket and a few articles of rough ward-robe. They worked their season, then spent their money merrily, and when it had departed went as merrily to work again. As they pulled their boat along, the waters were glad with the songs to which their feet kept time. The deck-hand of the steamboat has succeeded the voyager, and there is no picturesqueness in him.

#### THE FORT AS IT IS.

Not long since, in company with Captain O. A. Southmayd, the much-esteemed clerk of the board of supervisors, in this county, whose pleasant hospitality we enjoyed, we drove to the site of the old fort and inspected its remains. Duration and disuetude have been heavy upon it. Most of the buildings stand. But they are sadly dismantled and decayed. One of the small yet massive block-houses was burned simultaneously with the line of buildings forming the end of the quadrangle, just within those defenses. The other remains; but it has been prostituted to bovine purposes. A domestic quadruped of that species shelters herself from the nightly attacks of the weather in the strong enclosure built for



refuge from the fury of the savage. On several of the edifices used for officers' quarters and similar accommodations the mossy roofing has descended almost to the ground, and barely depends, in crumpled decay, over the faces of the buildings. As when dilapidation seizes upon human ruins, and dejects and frays their capital surmountings, obtruding the tatters into their very eyes. The timbers were all of the best pine.—The weather, however, if a slow hewer, is one that never rests; and they must soon come down. The battered well with its forty feet of depth and its never-failing waters remains in the center of the square, and answers its purpose. Yet the roofed curbed and heavy roller, worn with much yielding of pure refreshment, appears about to make its grave of the shaft beneath it, and is in a condition to improvise a tomb for any drawer of water that gives it a call. The magazine wards off the worm as only stone can. Its safe interior has been transmuted into a boudoir for a new milch cow. The stone bakery is also in good preservation. What use poverty, which makes men burrow where'er they can, has put this to, we did not observe. The only human figure to be discerned about the premises was a red shirted Celt, pantalooned in what might be the cast-off undress of some former commandant, long since gone to glory not military, and the child he carried in his arms; though there were flitting, in one of the better preserved buildings, evidence of further family present and future. He and his brood are the only life now in these former haunts, once so full of frontier and militant animation. The outward walls are lettered with posters, ruptured by the winds and rains, and are placarded with names of firms, telling you where to purchase watches, or adjuring you to buy some nostrum incompatible with debility or death. Silence and abandonment, two owls, ancient and voiceless, brood over the place. Existence passes it, but seldom stops. Its early origin and its associations attract you thither, then curiosity melt into sadness at its desolation, and you turn from the ruin with no care to visit it again.

Across the bridge on the side toward Portage City, which is a mile away, there are a few rusty vestiges of former times. A store or store is standing, looking as if a great freshet in the past had borne it from some town up stream and stranded it, to rot in forgetfulness. Several residences, long descended into the vale of years, are still doing, in an enfeebled way, the work of their youth. And a few comfortable homes of a later era are to be seen in the vicinity.

#### THE FRANKLIN HOUSE.

More rods away, on the left of Bronson's Avenue—which was to be the broad, main street of the future city—is the Franklin House, built as a tavern by captain Gideon Low, when he resigned his commission, half a good life-time ago. Seen from the roadside, it is an immense, rambling, discolored

relic, around which stands a solemn group of older residents than ever slept beneath them, shaking their withered hands as if stormily bewailing the ruin of the thing they watched so long. Before the building of the breakwater, floods traveling towards two oceans used to drive into the door-yard of this old public and seek accommodations.—Courts were held within it when courts in this county were bantlings. A dead generation was merry here, and very merry too. And very sad, doubtless. All generations sometimes are. No business man could wring thrif from this antique barrack now, although there was no lack of reckonings once. The highest enterprise would utilize it as a wholesale factory of ghost-stories, probably.

#### LATER CHANGES.

Growth, often the fickliest of uncertainties, passed down the broad road that was to become the handsome thoroughfare. It tarried at the foot while, and the old United States hotel sprang up. But battles were in progress among capitalists and owners of the soil, the victory in which was to be the designation of the center of a city. There was another removal, and finally the heart of Portage throbs where it is.

#### A DRY PUMP.

The only soldiers of the fort remaining about here are Henry Carpenter, of Moundville; Wm. Wier, of Portage, who was a captain in the recent war, and Michael Tobin. The latter is a character. For years he has lived alone in a solitary cabin in the woods, a mile or two from the former post. He might become a skeleton and nobody would know it. It occurred to us, as a newspaper reporter, that many readable anecdotes of garrison time might be extracted from him. But the fort is not so thoroughly evacuated as he. He is like a hopper—you get nothing out of him except what you put in. His conversation is yea and nay, and that only.

#### EVACUATION AND SALE.

The garrison, consisting then of only two companies, was ordered to Texas in 1845, and the post was never afterwards occupied. It was left in charge of ordnance sergeant Van Camp, who looked after it until 1847, when he died. Wm. Wier then had charge of it until 1853, when it was sold at auction under an order affecting such property, made by Jeff. Davis, as secretary of war. The reservation comprising nearly 4,000 acres, was sold to B. Martin, of Milwaukee, and others, for about \$20,000. It is now owned by Wm. Wells, a banker of Fond du Lac, and Captain F. H. Masten, of Buffalo.

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