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Portage Democrat

March 1, 1915.

JUMPING CLAIMS IN NEW PORTAGE

POPULAR AMUSEMENT WAY BACK IN THE FIFTIES.

John Eiff, Pioneer of "Gougeville,"
Writes to Tell How Nerve and
Musket Once Were Supreme.

While the pioneers of Portage are digging up recollections of the '50's to give at the Men's Social Union banquet at the Baptist church Tuesday evening, John Eiff, 788 Thirty-Fourth street, Milwaukee, writes The Democrat as follows:

"Learning thru my friend, Mrs. Martin, who is a daughter of the late Charles H. Moore, a pioneer of your city, that there will be a meeting on Tuesday of some of the pioneers of old Fort Winnebago and Portage, Mrs. Martin suggested to me that some of the old timers might appreciate a few lines from me, giving some of my experiences and recollections of old times in Gougeville, Wauona-Portage and the old Fort.

"I was born in Victoria Co., Canada, on Dec. 31, 1835. Both my parents died before I was two years old. My aunt, Mrs. Gorman, took me into her family and brought me to Wisconsin, arriving in Milwaukee on July 7, 1839, and we settled in town of Greenfield, Sauk county, the same month. When I was nine years old I went to live in the family of C. H. Moore, who had married my aunt's oldest daughter Ellen. In 1849 Mr. Moore sold his farm in Greenfield and settled at Fort Winnebago in November, 1849. He formed a partnership with M. R. Keegan. They carried on a general store business in the old government warehouse

which was still standing on the bank of Fox river in 1908, when I attended your home-coming, when I enjoyed very much the meeting with so many of my old friends and acquaintances, John Graham, Mr. Carroll, Mrs. Perry Williams and hosts of other dear friends whom I cannot now call to mind.

"When Mr. Moore went to Fort Winnebago I stayed in Greenfield and attended school that winter and in the following March I followed the family to Fort Winnebago by stage. We lived on the second floor of the building in which they kept store. The first story of the building was stone and the second story was of frame construction. In the summer of 1850 Mr. Moore and Mr. Keegan dissolved their partnership. Mr. Moore located on the corner of Wisconsin and Canal streets (Wisconsin street was originally called the Pinery road.)

"My recollections of early Portage are getting pretty hazy. Sixty-five years is a pretty long time. I am now in my eightieth year. I can very well remember, though what a rough time Dick Veeder, Joel Whitney and many other original settlers had in trying to hold their claims against the squatters and claim jumpers. The principal amusement then seemed to be drinking whisky, jumping claims, lawing and fighting. Sam Benedict, Tinker O'Neill and several other celebrated wranglers made it lively for the new burg.

"Among the older settlers whom I can now name were Hugh McFarlane, father of Mrs. Perry Williams; Andrew Dunn, father of Mrs. Dr. N. A. Gray of Milwaukee; Dr. Hottenstein, Henry Carpenter, father of George, my old schoolmate, who was the first white boy born at the Portage; and Bill Armstrong.

"Then Portage was called Gougeville (it was no misnomer) for it was all the go to gobble all the land one could and then fight it out in court or with the fists. There was a mick named Corbett who wore one of those

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green Irish overcoats and it was said that all Corbett had to do was to stake out a lot on any other man's claim, hang his green coat on one of the stakes and with his Queen Anne musket in his hand defy the rest of the crowd to put him off of his jumped claim. I guess that was true, for I saw him one forenoon defend such a transaction on Canal street the night before he had taken down Joel Whitney's fence on the Canal street front of his 40-acre farm, stake out his lot, pile lumber around the edge of his lot and stand there with his shotgun to defy Whitney or any one else to dispossess him. Those who had money to spend in lawsuits had plenty of opportunity to lighten their purses.

"I do not know just what the program is to be on Tuesday. If I had more time, I could perhaps write more interestingly. I am always glad to hear from the old folks at home."

