

Memoirs of Waukesha County

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Researching and writing an article about rails and trains rolling through Brookfield and Elm Grove, I read parts of *Memoirs of Waukesha County* published in 1907, with Theron W. Haight (1840—1913) listed as editor. In the book's opening pages (copies of some below), I was struck by how badly Native Americans, their traditions, habitats, and so on were treated by the government and settlers.*

For example, page 52 includes: "They were removed to the Missouri river in 1836." On pages 53 and 56, mounds are described in places well-known to residents today. Possible etymology of the name "Waukesha" is detailed on pages 60 and 61 and "Pewaukee" on 62.

The final paragraph on page 69 describes soil homeowners are plenty familiar with and the beginning of an 1841 journey from Milwaukee to Brookfield that concludes on the next page.

A poignant line probably true of unspoiled Nature everywhere appears about a quarter of the way down page 70: "It is impossible to convince one of those early settlers that the hand of civilization has added anything to the beauty or attractiveness of southeastern Wisconsin."

*Not that there is reason to think Native Americans would have treated Europeans any better had they been able to sail across the Atlantic.

CHAPTER II.

INDIAN AFFAIRS.

WAUKESHA COUNTY A FAVORITE LOCATION—REMAINS OF THE MOUND BUILDERS—WAUKESHA MOUNDS—SUMMIT MOUNDS—MOUNDS AND GARDENS IN MUSKEGO—LIST OF MOUNDS PREPARED BY THE STATE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY—OCCUPATION BY THE POTTAWATTOMIES—ORIGIN OF "HIAWATHA"—VISIT OF EBENEZER CHILDS IN 1821—CEDING OF LANDS AND REMOVAL OF THE TRIBE—"INDIAN SCARE" OF 1862—INDIAN NOMENCLATURE—CONFLICT OF AUTHORITIES.

Waukesha county, with its varied features, its deep forests, its oak openings, its prairies, its many beautiful lakes, was from pre-historic ages a favorite home of the wandering tribes that inhabited the country, both the Indians and their predecessors, the mound builders.

Where Waukesha city is located was a favorite crossing of the river, and deeply worn trails from all directions showed how generation after generation had followed these paths through the forests and across the prairies. The Pottawattomies who were on friendly terms with their neighbors, the Winnebagoes and Menominees, occupied the country when it was first visited by the whites. They relinquished their title to the lands in this part of the state in 1836, some settlements having been made the previous year in anticipation of the terms of this treaty. They were removed to the Missouri river in 1836, but many of them returned from time to time; a large encampment of them coming in 1864 and remaining for a considerable time in the Wisconsin valley in the territory of the Winnebagoes. They were in later years a friendly tribe, and took to civilized customs more readily than many of the Indians.

Of their predecessors there is probably no part of the state originally richer in remains, but very many of the mounds of which early records are given have nearly or entirely disappeared. The pioneers had little time, and apparently less inclination to trouble themselves about the peoples who had preceded them as owners of the soil, and only in comparatively recent years has any effort been made to preserve these interesting and valuable historical remains of an earlier occupation.

One mound, near East avenue, Waukesha, representing an enormous lizard, is partly destroyed by the location of the Catholic church on the tail of the effigy and a dwelling house on the head. Another, lying a little east of Grand avenue, is cut across by Wisconsin avenue. Those that are located in the grounds of Carroll College are fortunately preserved.

Rev. Stephen D. Peet, in speaking of the Waukesha mounds says: "A very conspicuous turtle mound is found at Waukesha—a very

fine specimen of the ancient art of mound building, with its graceful curves, the feet projecting forward and backward and the tail with its gradual slope so acutely pointed that it is impossible to tell where it terminated. The body is fifty-six feet long, and six feet wide, and the tail two hundred and fifty feet in length. Another turtle effigy at Waukesha is preserved on the college grounds; both are situated where an extensive view may be obtained, the first giving a view toward the river and the valley at the west, while the one on the college grounds is situated higher up and gives a view to the east. The seven turtle mounds at Pewaukee occupy the summit of a ridge and were in 1851 very conspicuous. They have been nearly obliterated. Other mound remains are on the bluff nearer the village, one of which is a turtle effigy, and this is also in a prominent position where an extensive view of an ancient lake—now a marsh—could be obtained."

The northwestern part of the county is also very rich in mounds, and in an early day showed many more remains than now. In the town of Summit there is a singularly shaped effigy mound resembling a swan or some prehistoric animal. The body of this grotesque monster is seventy-five by twenty feet, its neck is twenty feet long and eleven and one-half wide, and its short legs about five and one-half feet wide. Near it is another mound resembling an open pair of shears, or as some think, a form of cross, the extremities being sixty or seventy feet long; this is on the north and south road west of the Lower Nashotah lake and is on the eastern side of the road nearly or quite obliterated by frequent plowings. There is a turtle mound near the shore of Silver lake, and a curious elevation, locally known as the "Horse Mound" near the home of Mr. Regula, in the town of Summit. The extreme length is variously given as from 132 to 150 feet; the head and neck being thirty-seven, the body thirty-seven and the tail seventy-five. It bears little resemblance to a horse, with which it is not at all probable that the mound builders were familiar. Another group of mounds in the same neighborhood, called the "Regula mounds," some on the farm of Charles Walton, are mostly effigy (animal shaped) mounds. Constant plowing has destroyed many, others are much injured. A road running north and south from Summit Corners passed through several of which no trace is left. One of the partially destroyed mounds, known locally as the "Cross mound," is believed by archeologists to be one of the "bird" mounds, so common in the state. Two mounds of the so-called "panther" type, with short bodies and long tails, are found in the Waukesha lake region. One measures 250 and the other over 300 feet in length. In the early days there were many others in the towns of Oconomowoc and Summit. Members of the Wisconsin Archeological Society explored the vicinity of Muskego lake and placed on record a number of small groups of mounds. They discovered also in this region the remains of Indian village sites and planting grounds. The garden beds are supposed to have been made by people who followed the mound builders. They are marked by long parallel ridges, and frequently run across the mounds, the Indians regarding them in very much the same light as that in which they were regarded by the early white settlers. The

site on various tracts, mainly in the south half of section 13. 13. Cemetery on the farm of Mrs. W. Russell, on the shore of Big Lake Muskego, southeast quarter of fractional section 27. 14. Pottawattomie village site on Lake Denoon (Denoon).

TOWN OF NEW BERLIN. 1. Mounds formerly existed on J. Elger's farm at Calhoun, section 3. 2. Menomonee Indian village located in Poplar creek bottom, section 29; site abandoned in the early fifties; burial since unearthed in a gravel hill on F. Stigler's farm in section 9.

TOWN OF OCONOMOWOC. 1. A linear embankment formerly existed one-fourth of a mile northeast of Oconomowoc. 2. Indications of a work shop and camp site one mile west of Oconomowoc.

TOWN OF PEWAUKEE. 1. Pottawattomie village located at Pewaukee in 1855. 2. Cache of six blue horn-stone implements found on the south shore of Pewaukee lake near the village of Pewaukee. 3. Traces of mounds at east end of Pewaukee lake, immediately north of the village; injured by road building and dam. 4. Turtle effigy and oval mounds on a hill on the W. Clark place, at the east end of Pewaukee lake, section 9. 5. Group of effigy and oval mounds and intaglio, east of Pewaukee lake, one and one-half miles southeast of Pewaukee, section 16. 6. Group of mounds on the south shore of Pewaukee lake, in section 18. 7. Effigy mound on the Solomon Horn place, northwest quarter of section 16. 8. Group of an effigy and conical mounds on northwest quarter of section 26. 9. Group of four effigy and three conical mounds at the intersection of the Waukesha and old Madison roads, section 26, one and one-half miles north of Waukesha. 10. Effigy mound (lizard) on above road, southeast quarter of section 26; nearly destroyed.

TOWN OF SUMMIT. 1. Turtle effigy where the A. Dixon home now stands, section 2. 2. Group of four linear and effigy mounds at the forks of the Oconomowoc and Summit roads, sections 10 and 3. 3. Group of twenty-eight or more conical, linear and effigy mounds at Summit corners, on the west side of the Oconomowoc road, mostly on the northwest quarter of section 15 and the southwest quarter of section 10; now almost wholly obliterated. 4. Group of three linear mounds north of Silver lake, southwest quarter of section 8. 5. Turtle effigy a short distance east of the foregoing, section 8. Original shown by I. A. Lapham, 1855. 6. Turtle effigy on W. Stone's place, on the south shore of Silver lake. 7. Several mounds on F. Fredler's place, at the southeast end of same lake. 8. Group of mounds at Dibble & Brown's farm, at Summit corners. 9. Regula group of twenty or more conical, effigy and oval mounds on Jacob Regula's farm, on the north side of the Summit and Delafield road, sections 14 and 15. Some excavated by relic hunters; about twelve remain. 10. Indication of a flint shop on a knoll on the same property. The trail to Oconomowoc and another trail crossed between these mounds. 11. Several mounds formerly existed on the Charles Walthers' property, on the east shore of Lake Otis, south of the foregoing group. 12. An Indian camp existed in 1845 at the head of Crooked lake, east of the above. 13. Group of effigy mounds on the L. Pfister and G. I. Robinson properties, sections 13 and 14, northwest of Lower

igan to the Mississippi river, and seemingly had no, or at least very slight, foundation, is a singular psychological phenomenon. The fact that the war had left many families without their natural protectors would account in part for the panic, but not entirely; the circumstance presents an interesting study of the contagion of hysteria.

Waukesha is especially rich in Indian nomenclature; Kesug, Menomonee, Muskego, Mukwonago, Nagawicka, Nashotah, Nemahbin, Oconomowoc, Ogauchee, Ottawa, Pewaukee, and Waukesha being the principal names.

The name Waukesha has been the subject of various opinions as to its derivation. According to Peter Vieau—son of Jacques Vieau, one of the French trappers and familiar with the Indians of this region long before there was any attempt made at settlement—the original name for the Fox river was "*Chekashskotah*," meaning "burnt prairie," and "*Seeper*," "river," and that the first name given to the white settlement, "Prairie Village," was a partial translation of this name. Later the Pottawattomie name, which he calls "*Waugooshance*," meaning "little foxes," was adopted in the modified form of "Waukesha." Rev. William Barry, writing in 1856, says that the original form of Waukesha was "*Wan-gnash-sha*" and that the word was of Chippewa origin. Father C. Verwyst, a missionary to the Chippewas, and considered a good authority, gives the original word as "*Wag-o-shag*," but also gives the meaning as "foxes," either from the finding of foxes in the neighborhood, or from the fox being the *totem* of the tribe occupying the territory. As the first treaty made with the Indians covering this territory was with the Sacs and Foxes, the latter explanation seems reasonable. Although Father Verwyst, familiar with the Chippewa language, refers many of the Indian names to corrupted words of that tongue, the preponderance of authority would give the original of Waukesha to the Pottawattomie language.

The name Waukesha was never written in English until 1846, when it was inscribed on an oak tree where the village of Rochester, in Racine county, now stands. The name was selected by Joshua Hathaway, who, in company with Messrs. Cox and Myers, selected this location for a future town site. Mr. Hathaway stated that he obtained the word from Pottawattomie Indians and said that it meant "fox" or "little fox" and was applied to the river on the banks of which Waukesha is located. Mr. Hathaway gives the original pronunciation with a prolonged accent on the middle syllable and the last one but half aspirated, "*Wan-kee-shah*," and says that the name was a favorite name with the Indians for crooked rivers, whose windings resembled the eccentric trail of the cunning animal whose name they bore.

Milwaukee, whose origin is also claimed by both the Chippewa and Pottawattomie languages, is variously spelled Minnawack, Millwackie, Milleoki, Meneawkie, Milwalky, Millewackie, Milouqui, etc., by the early writers, and the name has also many pronunciations, even among those who endeavored to give it the original articulation. One authority gives it "Mahn-a-wau-kee" and another "Me-ne-wau-kee." The usual signification attached to the name is "rich or beautiful land," and this is the one given by Louis Moran, the interpreter of the Chippewas.

There is another theory, advanced by Augustin Grignon, the old French settler at Green Bay, viz., that in the vicinity of Milwaukee was found an aromatic root which was used for medicinal purposes, and so far as the Indians knew, was confined to that locality. He says that the Chippewas would give a beaver skin for a piece as large as a man's finger. From this circumstance the name was derived, "*man-a-wa*" meaning "root," and "*man-a-wa-kee*," place of the root. Grignon mentions the other derivation but does not place much confidence in it. He gives no suggestion as to what the root was, but placed more emphasis upon its aromatic than upon its medicinal qualities, and the fact that it was used with other medicines to disguise unpleasant flavors. M. Gaudin, quoted by Father Verwyst, also refers Milwaukee in the original to the Chippewa language, as "*Minwaki*," meaning "good land," and says in support of his theory that in Chippewa the letter "n" is used instead of "l," the latter not being found in pure Chippewa words. Mr. Gernoe derives Milwaukee from "*mine-waki*" (pronounced mee-nai-wau-kee) meaning "a promontory," having reference to the high point of land, known to the early settlers as "Walker's Point." The name is also said to be from "*maunamwauke*," "place of the gathering of multitudes." Out of all these conflicting authorities it is difficult to decide, but the usual signification attached to the name is the one first given "good land."

Mukwonago, also variously spelled in the early documents as Mequanigo, and Mequanego, is from the Pottawattomie word "*me-quan-i-go-ick*," meaning "a ladle" according to one authority, and took its signification from a bend in the river by that name which resembles an Indian ladle, which was a very crooked utensil, having a handle which turned quite over the bowl. More reliable authorities give as the original form "*mukwa*," bear, and "*onahko*," fat, with reference to the place as a good hunting ground for bears; a similar original "*makwan-agong*," (pronounced mauk-wau-na-gong), means a place where the bear lies, or a bear-lair. Both Peter Vican and Father Verwyst, who seldom agree on derivations, give the word "*mukwa*" or "*mukwau*" (bear), and the principal word in the original name.

Muskego is from "*muskeewak*," meaning "Sun-fish" probably a Pottawattomie word.

Menomonee is from a similar word of the tribe by the same name, and means the native grain known to the whites as "wild rice," this being an important food of this tribe.

Nashotah, also Neshota, applied under the latter form to the "West Twin" of the two streams meeting at Two Rivers. Manitowoc county, means "twins" and is appropriately applied to the upper and lower lakes in the northeastern part of Summit township.

Ottawa, according to W. W. Warren, an intelligent half-breed interpreter, is the name of a tribe, originally "*A-dat-ta-wag*," from "*atawe*" or "*attawa*," meaning "trading," the whole word signifying "a trading people."

Oconomowoc has a choice of at least three originals, the Chippewa word, "*okonimawa*," meaning "beaver-dam" from work of the industrious little builders in the vicinity; "*oconnemiwing*," meaning "gather-

it may have been the point at which their first long journey into the wilderness temporarily terminated.

The Black Hawk War (1832), although an episode in border history not altogether to the credit of the whites who took part in it, was fraught with great consequences to the conquering race. Until that time southern Wisconsin was regarded as a wilderness which could never attract a civilized community. Stories were told about its being a vast morass, unsuitable for agricultural purposes, and the praises of occasional visitors had failed to make any impression on the general public. A few traders along the Lake Michigan and Green Bay shores, a few travelers along the Fox-Wisconsin route, and a few hardy miners attracted by the lead in the southwestern part of the state, included the whole of the peripatetic population. The war, which led a band of adventurous frontiersmen across the state from the Rock river to the Mississippi, revealed the possibilities of this hitherto unexplored region to the keen eyes of the militia-men, who made known its resources to the world. The war was followed by a great influx of settlers, and the attention of the general government was called to this portion of the Northwest territory, which led to a speedy extinction of the Indian title to the soil.

In 1835 Henry E. James made a trip from Racine county to the Rock river. He writes: "We reached Prairie Village on the Fox river on the first (November), and pushed on in good spirits, and camped between Mukwonago and where Troy now stands. * * * We started as soon as we could see the Indian trail—there were no other roads in the country at that time—one carrying the bed—a buffalo robe and a blanket—and the other a gun and knapsack containing our 'grub.'"

The Prairie Village to which reference was made was the beginnings of the present city of Waukesha. In 1834 there was not a building in the territory now included in Waukesha county except the two claim shanties, constructed of poles and serving as the homes of Alonzo and Morris D. Cutler. These were erected in the spring of that year, one near the site of Blair's iron works and the other near the Indian mounds in what was afterward Cutler's park. In 1835 half a dozen more pioneers came, some of them bringing their families. One writer of 1837 says that at that time there was but one house between Jefferson and Prairieville (Waukesha), and that was at Bark river mill; that there were but two houses at Prairieville, those of Mr. Walton and Mr. McMillan, and but two houses—that of Robert Curran, at Brookfield, and of Mr. Parsons, at Wauwatosa—between Prairieville and Milwaukee.

Silas Chapman, describing his experiences in the early days of Waukesha, says that when he came from Milwaukee in the spring of 1841 there was scarcely anything that could be called a road. That they were obliged to cross deep gullies, now bridged or filled, and over long stretches of corduroy which afforded the only passage across the swamps and sloughs, their vehicles laden with the "tenacious clay" that made traveling anything but speedy or agreeable. Their way led from the present Twenty-seventh street, Milwaukee, to Poplar

creek, near Brookfield, through an unbroken forest, except that at Wauwatosa there were five or six houses, and one at Brookfield (later the Gregg farm) at that time occupied by Mr. Robert Curran and three or four others, all of logs. At Poplar creek there was a frame house occupied by a farmer named Story. Milwaukee was at that time a village of two thousand inhabitants. After leaving the woods the country is described as beautiful, with oak openings like artificial groves and the meadows covered with a carpet of grass and a profusion of beautiful flowers. It is impossible to convince one of those early settlers that the hand of civilization has added anything to the beauty or attractiveness of southeastern Wisconsin. In the evening of the day on which the journey was begun at Milwaukee, the travelers found rest and lodging at the Prairieville House, then kept by Samuel H. Barstow, brother to William A. Barstow (afterward governor of the state of Wisconsin). The original building was of logs, but later a frame building was added. It was located on the spot afterward occupied by Thuerwacherter's meat-market. There were at that time about twenty-five families in Prairieville, and the houses were built mostly of logs; a few were of frame, and some temporary structures were made of slabs. One was built where Verner Tichnor's residence was afterward located, one where the Congregational church now stands, a few on Wisconsin avenue, west of Grand avenue, a boarding-house, built mostly of slabs, on Main street, and a few others scattered in the vicinity. There was a mill and one store owned by William A. Barstow, and a Congregational church, the only church in that part of the state—except the Catholic church in Milwaukee—located on the present corner of Wisconsin and Maple avenues. The schoolhouse was situated west of the present St. Paul station and was built of logs. There was no house obtainable, and Mr. Chapman and his family were obliged to move into an old log trading-post which had been built for the Hudson Bay Fur Company, in what is now the court-house square. The building had two windows and one door, a board roof and a puncheon floor. The family hung mosquito-netting over the door to keep out insects and snakes. The only trees on the little prairie were in a cluster near what is now the corner of Grand and Wisconsin avenues. At that time Waukesha boasted about two hundred inhabitants and was the largest inland settlement except Mineral Point and Beloit. On the slope above the Silurian spring there were newly-made Indian graves.

In 1842 the first brick house in Waukesha county was built in Mukwonago by Sewell Andrews, a pioneer of 1836. The building was of Mukwonago brick, with limestone trimmings and a rock foundation, enclosing a basement that was partitioned and floored with brick. The front door was enclosed in an old-style, hand-carved frame. Later an addition was built on the north side for an office.

The credit of establishing the first store, or trading-post, within the present limits of Waukesha county has usually been given to Solomon Juneau, but Andrew J. Vieau, a brother-in-law of Juneau's, claims that he and not Juneau, was the first general merchant.