Westward, ho

Foster led wagon train to Fort

By Thomas Beebe

The Indians were the first inhabitants of what was to become Fort Atkinson, as early reports placed villages of both the Winnebago and the Pottawatomis tribes on the shores of Lake Koshkonong.

The area which today is Jefferson County was first explored and later claimed by France and then ceded to Great Britain in 1763. British and French interests were much the same, the rich fur bearing animal population.

Following the Revolutionary War, America acquired the land in 1783, although it wasn't until 1786 that all British posts were in the hands of their new owners.

Through the War of 1812 and beyond, the land now occupied by Fort Atkinson was crossed by a few army trails but not much more. The land was so unsettled and so unsurveyed that Jefferson Davis, a young West Point graduate stationed at Fort Winnebago (Portage) in 1829, could claim to be the first American to chart the area. He was also, quite possibly, the first American to see Lake Koshkonong.

The Black Hawk War, although a sad chapter in American military history, upped the interest in the land around Lake Koshkonong. Where the Indians had fought to regain their land, the actual outcome was an influx of white settlers.

In order to keep the influx orderly, the United States government set out in 1832 to survey the land west of Lake Michigan. One of the surveyors, and one of Jefferson County's first settlers was Milo Jones. A Vermont farmer, he came to Wisconsin in 1834 to work as an axman running meridian lines for surveyor Hiram Bingham.

By 1838, the future of the area around Lake Koshkonong was brightening. A group of men — including Jones, Dwight Foster and Solomon Jneau — organized the Rock River Land and Claim Co. for the purpose of claiming the land at the terminus of a proposed canal connecting the Rock River with Lake Michigan.

Although pronounced feasible and funded to the tune of $800,000 in 1838, the canal failed in 1844 after only one mile of digging. However, interest in the new land by the great lake was now unstoppable.

Dwight Foster was born at Union, Conn., on April 18, 1831. After a family move to Oneida, N.Y., Foster relocated his family to Milwaukee in 1838 where he joined the Rock River Land and Claim Co. That fall, he became the first member of the corporation to settle his family along the Rock River.

During their early years in the area, the Fosters' home served as a stopping off place for many, many travelers. In February 1837, Dwight welcomed his brothers Edward and Alvin and their wives, and in 1838 he began the first ferry service across the Rock River and became the first postmaster, a position he held for four years.

Foster, in addition to his obvious claim to fame, was most well known for opening up his home as a gathering place for friends and weary strangers alike. He died in Fort Atkinson on Feb. 8, 1870.

Foster's coming to the Fort Atkinson area opened the floodgate of migration. In 1837, his sister, Rebekah, and her husband, Rufus Dodge, a blacksmith from New York, followed to the area. Rufus Dodge had moved to the Bark River in 1836 to help Alvin Foster and David Sargent build a sawmill. Once that was accomplished, he returned to New York, packed up his wife and son, and made the journey back to Fort Atkinson.

There is often little difference between the famous and infamous. That fine line applied to one area pioneer clan that became known as the "Fighting Finchess."

Originally from Pennsylvania, the Finchess moved to Michigan in the 1830s. They served in that state's militia during the Black Hawk War and received bounty land in Jefferson County. By 1838, Moses Finch, four of his 12 sons and their families had settled near Lake Koshkonong which became known as Finchtown.

Alleged troubles with neighbors resulted in part of the clan moving to Lake Mills where they settled west of Rock Lake on London Marsh, and by the start of the Civil War almost all of the family had packed up and moved to such places as Missouri and Iowa and some even further west. In 1899, a fitting epitaph was written for the "Fighting Finchess": "They were of that class of restless spirits who are continually looking beyond for other conquests to make in the subjugation of nature's wild forces."

Without a doubt, one of Fort Atkinson's most successful early citizens was Lucien B. Caswell. The son of a Vermont farmer, he was born in 1827 and migrated, with his family, to a location on the Rock River south of Lake Koshkonong in 1837.

Following legal studies at the Milton Academy and Beloit College, Caswell hung out his shingle in Fort Atkinson in 1832.

During his long life, L.B. Caswell served his community, state and nation through many elective and appointive posts. He was a member of the school board, a district attorney, commissioner of the draft board during the Civil War, a member of the Wisconsin Legislature and a 14-year veteran of Congress. He also played a prominent role in bringing the railroad to Fort Atkinson and organizing the city's first bank.

Fort Atkinson even had its own resident naturalist. Thure Kumlun, born in Sweden in 1819, emigrated to America in 1843. Educated in the study of botany at the University of Upsala, he picked Lake Koshkonong for his home because of

(Continued on page 6)

Charles Rockwell built Dwight Foster's house in 1841.

July 18, 1930
May, Jones among Fort’s first settlers

(Continued from page 0)

his desire to study birds.

Kumlien and his wife to be, Christine Wallberg, selected a location on the north side of the lake, later named Busseyville for Thomas Bussey who built a gristmill on Koshkonong Creek. In addition to farming, Kumlien spent a great deal of time mounting wildlife and enjoying the wonders of his new home.

Naturalists, bankers, builders and even inventors, Fort Atkinson had them all. Thomas Crane, the possessor of a creative mind and a mechanical bent, was the earliest of the latter.

Born in Massachusetts in 1822, Crane moved to Fort Atkinson in 1843 to work on the farm of his brother-in-law, Milo Jones. During his lifetime he invented and was granted patents for 20 products, several of which had considerable industrial value. His inventions included: a rotary pump, a hand-seed planter, a knitting machine, an improved washing machine, a cradle and rake, a can opener, a reversible gate hinge, a stump extractor, a coat hanger, an improved flour milling machine and the ever-popular “better mouse trap.”

And on and on they came, an ever-increasing flow of pioneer settlers to Fort Atkinson. There were Martin J. and Amanda Swart, who made the trip along the Erie Canal from New York in 1844 to establish the Swart homestead on old Highway 26 in 1848. There was Mary Wilcox Turner, a woman “endowed with large talents” who came from New York in 1845, and George Prestidge and his family, who made a 69-day boat trip from England to find Fort Atkinson in 1846 (first across the Atlantic Ocean, the Erie Canal and finally across the Great Lakes). Prestidge went on to establish Fort Atkinson’s first photographic studio at the corner of South Main and Third streets.

And there were more. Ezekiel Goodrich, the city’s first furniture maker, landed in Milwaukee in 1843 and then walked to Fort Atkinson to make his home. Or how about Chester May? He was born in New York in 1791 and came to Wisconsin to work on the proposed canal between Lake Michigan and the Rock River. When the project collapsed, he settled south of Fort Atkinson, near what is now La Crosse Cemetery. He was best-remembered legacy was three sons — Chester, Jr., Eli and George — all prominent residents of this city.

They came and they went; the rich and the famous, the hardworking and the industrious, and even a few scoundrels and scalawags. All, however, were Fort Atkinson pioneers who left an enduring imprint on the lives of those that followed.

Settlers used stockade for wood to build cabin

(Continued from page 3)

southwest from the fort, he is remembered on the commemorative war monument in Evergreen Cemetery under the incorrect name of “Daniel” Dobbs.

Capt. Gideon Low, 8th Regiment, U.S. Army Infantry, and his best

Company D, some 40 or so troops, remained in the fort when the rest of army left July 20 after finally discovering Black Hawk’s trail. Capt. Low’s troops remained in Fort Atkinson until September 25, 1832.

After the Black Hawk War, the 1832 treaty with the Winnebagos (held at Rock Island, Ill.) ceded the stockade to Wabansiae, a chief of the Pottawatomies who served as guides for Atkinson. He probably never even saw it.

U.S. government surveyors, interrupted by the Black Hawk War, resumed their work in the summer of 1832. The field notebook of one surveyor contains a map sketch of the Milton area and a trace headed north is identified as the “trail to Fort Atkinson.” This was the first reference to Fort Atkinson. Until then the stockade was called “Fort Cos-corong.”

In late 1835, some enterprising pioneers, including Solomon Juneau, Milo Jones, William Barrie, Alvin Foster and Dwight Foster, formed the Rock River Land and Claim Company.

What became of the fort?

Many of the pickets, along the river side, were removed by travelers passing through the country, headed west. There being no means of ferrying across the river, they would pull up these pickets, convert them into a raft and pole themselves across, leaving the raft to float down the river.

Other pickets were used by William Pritchard and David Barlett to build a cabin for Dwight Foster and his family.

On Saturday, June 20, 1840, Frederick J. Stairin, pioneer settler of Whitewater, wrote in his diary: “Having the offer of Mr. A.B. Weed’s horse to ride, I accepted and rode to Fort Atkinson this afternoon, which is eight or nine miles distant. At the fort (which is now demolished and never was anything more than a few pickets occupied by Gen. Atkinson during the Black Hawk War) there is but one house owned by a Mr. Foster who keeps the ferry.”

If all those events occurred before Dwight Foster, imagine all the events which took place after he settled here!
Our new building is an extension of the community support we have received throughout the past 45 years. We'd like you to be a part of Fort Community — stop in soon.

FORT COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION

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Happy Birthday Fort Atkinson!

From all the friendly folks at your Fort Atkinson McDonald's!
Hush... Finches are riding by

By Sandra Bernhardt

"Honest folks would shiver and horns howl if Finches were on the prowl," according to Fort Atkinson folklore about a troublesome clan headed by patriarch Finch.

Known for their wild and woolly antics, Finch's 12 sons and five daughters were a bane under the shadow of organize bands from Lake Koshkonong to Watertown and beyond. The elusively tribe lived south of Fort Atkinson in a settlement called Finchston.

From the 1830s to 1860s, the family lived up to its nickname of the "Fighting Finches," stealing horses, cattle, and crops from local farmers and unguarded. Although they were never known to commit murder, Finches were reported to be expert shots with both pistol and rifle.

For example, legend has it that a newly arrived settler from Indiana took to boasting that he would take good care of any and all Finches who got within sights of his rifle. Naturally, word got to the Finches, who promptly ordered the boasting to stop. When the Hoosier ignored them, two Finch brothers caught him unarmed, placed him against a large tree and proceeded to trace the outline of the fellow's body with rifle bullets. The bragging stopped.

Old Moses taught his sons some very clever tricks when it came to horse stealing. According to the late Hannah Swart, who as curator of the Hoard Historical Museum studied the history of the Finches, "No one will ever know just how many horses the Finches and their henchmen stole during the years of their raiding, but the number must of been considerable. The Finches knew how to change the appearance of the horses by staining or bleaching them and by grooming their manes and tails."

Swart said marshy areas were used not only as hideouts for stolen horses, but as breeding grounds. A favorite hideout was a nearly impenetrable swamp near Rock Lake known as the London Marsh, an area still known as Finches' Ford. After the Finches encountered the law in the Fort Atkinson area, this was the spot from which they continued their horse stealing and other assorted mischief. The Finches rode the only the best specimens of frontier horse flesh, and there was a ready market for them.

Swart also maintained that the use of the lasso in the history of Jefferson County can be credited to the Finch gang, for members of that clan used that art in capturing horses and cattle.

Although the story was never substantiated, it is said that one unlucky farmer had his horse stolen, went to the market to buy another and ended up buying his own horse because he thought the new one resembled the stolen one under alteration and coloring talents of the notorious Finches.

Not wishing to confuse their trespasses, decide the Finches also held up wagon trains delivering goods to settlements between Milwaukee and Madison. A.R. Earle, a leading citizen in the Town of Azalan, was said to have ordered a bolt of expensive red velvet to be used in the decoration of a new mansion he was building. Unfortunately, he bragged about the precious shipment soon to arrive, and consequently, the long-awaited cargo never arrived. Shortly thereafter, however, the Finch women appeared in stashing new velvet riding habits of a most brazen red.

According to a 1967 Works Progress Administration Federal Writers Project, "More frequently than not, the Finch women did the farming, planting, and harvesting Abraham Lincoln's crops were mainly corn, pumpkins and some small grains." It is thought that they stole most of their needed supplies.

Not much more is known about the five Finch daughters, except that they were regarded as skillful and fearless housewomen. Patsy (Patricia) Finch, often described as a black-haired beauty with flashing black eyes, was better liked than her brothers. She was said to perform small deeds of kindness for her neighbors. In later years, she rejoined her brother and set up a reputable Milwaukee merchant and settle down to raise a family.

When Jefferson County separated from Milwaukee County in 1836, the Finches held considerable political clout. At that time, what is now the Town of Koshkonong was known as Finch township. According to records, Finch was the first town constable. Records list Daniel Finch as commissioner of highways and his brothers, Charles, William, James, and I.B. Finch, as postmasters.

In a September 1978 article, "The Fearsome Fighting Finches," written by Anne B. Short in Madison Magazine, Hannah Swart was quoted as saying, "How convenient for a lawless family to have one of their own as chief law enforcement officer... They were in a strategic position to keep an eye on new families as they moved in."

At the same time, Charles Finch also doubled as Justice of the Peace and Mose Finch was a local privy, chief of weights and measures. Short said, "The Finches, literally and figuratively, were in the saddle."

If Finches announced loud and clear that their township was for Finches and Finches alone. There was no room for others. If strangers tried to invade their private domain, they would often disguise themselves as Indians and carry out raids to frighten the intruders away. Before long, local citizens grew wise to their escapes and they were forced to give up the masquerade.

While living on the east side of Lake Koshkonong, the Finches spent time making "time water," now known as plaster. Benoni Finch, one of the more reputable Finch brothers, was a bricklayer, credited with erecting the first two-story brick dwelling in Milwaukee in 1836. The bricks he used are frequently referred to as Milwaukee Cream City Brick.

Unfortunately, he was also credited with structures that collapsed, as reported in the Milwaukee Sentinel in 1876. Benoni served as a first sheriff of Milwaukee County during the territorial era. Today, there are still a few structures standing in Jefferson County that are identified to Benoni's more successful brickwork.

While Benoni invested his energy into bricklaying, his rowdier brothers continued to get in trouble with their neighbors. One incident that has been verified in county records was a disagreement between the Finches and Sheriff Ira Bird of Dane County in 1845 or 1846.

According to Swart in Koshkonong Country: "Once, according to a Walter Finch, he had a dispute with another man, unnamed, whom Finch accused of killing his cow. The man went to Dan Finch and Finch followed him there and assaulted him. A warrant was sworn for his arrest. While attempting to arrest him, the man hid and the back door took place between Bird and his posse and the Finch family. Eventually Walter was arrested and served a sentence in the Green Lake jail."

"As a result of this incident, part of the family left Koshkonong Township and moved to Lake Mills, settling west of Rock Lake. By the start of the Civil War, almost the whole family had left Jefferson County. Some went to Missouri, some to Iowa, and some further west."

Another factor contributing to the demise of the Finch strangle hold on Jefferson County was the formation of the Anti-Horse Thief Society in 1853. Its objective was to recover stolen horses and return them to their lawful owners, "but more especially to arrest horse thieves with their raiders and abettors." The authorities drove many of the Finches from their lands and into the hands of organizations from neighboring townships.

Koshkonong Country, Swart told of an incident that took place several years later during the Civil War. According to the late E.B. Heizerman of the Civil War veteran, he ran into a Finch in Washington while his regiment came to rest alongside the troops from Michigan: "One of the Michigan men made it his business to find out from what state the adjacent regiments had come. When he found a Wisconsin troop, the soldier frowned loudly and said, 'When you get back home, tell them they haven't hung all the Finches yet.'"

Over the years, stories have been told of lost Finch treasure hidden deep in the swamps that the clan knew so well. But so far, the only "treasure" the Finches left behind was a jar of money found by a Lake Mills farmer in 1882.

Today, little remains to give testimony to the existence of thehard-fisted Fighting Finches and their terrorizing escapades. Except for a small family cemetery, the Amos Finch farm south of Fort Atkinson, and The Earle (of the red velvet story) "mansion" near Azalan State Park, we have only their stories and that perhaps is the best legacy of all.

It is said that after the unruly Finches had departed, their color and their legacy remained, causing parents to quiet their crying youngsters with words, "You'd better hush... the Finches are riding by..."

Who's on first?

Earli settler Thomas Crane always claimed that the first white man who came to Fort Atkinson was named Brown and arrived in 1835. He stayed in the stockade house but left for fear of Indians. Dwight Foster, who arrived in 1836, is considered to be the first real settler.
Fort observed 100th with style

By Carolyn Weh

It began slowly and quietly enough. Mrs. Ellis Klement, then president of the American Legion Auxiliary, and Mrs. H.W. Degner, Auxiliary community service Chairman, had written other community groups asking that they meet Feb. 7, 1936, to determine if, and how the Fort Atkinson should celebrate its centennial. That nucleus of some 40 persons nominated Elmore Klement to be their chairman, and plans for the festivities began.

The group decided that the main event would be a homecoming banquet to be held on Thursday evening, Aug. 6, with a parade the following night. A historical pageant would be presented in Jones Park Friday through Sunday evenings.

Friday was to be Business and Industry Day; several of the businesses would hold open house, there would be special sales in all the stores and there were to be wonderful antique displays in all the Main Street windows.

Saturday was designated Agriculture Day. It became the "Official Jefferson County 4-H Round-up," with animal and poultry judging and a noon picnic and speaker in Jones Park. Sunday, "Religious Day," featured special church services and then a special program "dedicated to Fort Atkinson pioneers" in Jones Park.

In order to pay for all these festivities, the committee held a centennial emblem design contest, with the winning emblem to be used to sell memberships in the celebration. Andrew Mueller of the W.D. Hoard Co. won $5 for his winning entry.

The committee also held a contest to choose a "Centennial Song." The winning tune was "Our Pioneers" by Mrs. C.L. Goodrich.

Plans for all the events continued throughout the spring and summer and kept a lot of people very busy.

The week before the centennial got under way. Miss Aileen Powell was named "Queen of Fort Atkinson." She and her court, which included Adeline Hartel, Lois Francisco and Dorothy Krull, were to preside over all the activities, ride in the parade and participate in other area parades throughout the summer.

Also, the queen was to represent Fort Atkinson in the Miss Wisconsin competition held at the State Fair. Miss Powell won the title because she sold the most tickets for the celebration.

Finally the big weekend arrived. About 300 persons attended the homecoming banquet Thursday night. Chairman Charles B. Rogers presided over a program that recognized many longtime residents and far-flung returnees, and which also allowed for plenty of visiting by all attending.

The cost of the meal, served by the Congregational Church Gleasers, was 60 cents. It was held in the Municipal Building, which was well decorated for the event. People came from as far away as Illinois, Michigan and California.

Friday evening, the parade assembled along North Main and North Fourth streets. It moved down Main Street to South Sixth and then over to Jones Park. It was held in the evening to allow more people to attend as both participants and spectators.

The parade stepped off at 7 p.m., led by Police Chief Harry Mueller on his motorcycle. The Jefferson County Union reported that between 12,000 to 15,000 people watched the bands, drum corps, floats, organizations and policemen from many nearby cities that contributed to the three-mile parade which swelled the hearts of everyone with satisfaction and pride.

The parade was divided into seven sections: official, historical, pageant, industrial, municipal, transportation and courtesy. Near the beginning was a birthday cake float with 150 lighted candles; its beauty increased as darkness fell. There was an ox-team depicting early travel, several Indian-related floats, lots of floats depicting early Fort Atkinson history and a display of many old pieces of farming equipment.

Notable among the bands in attendance were the Blatz Band from Milwaukee and the Zor Temple Band of Madison. Some people who remember the parade marvelled that "it seemed like it lasted for at least two days."

When the parade was over, the curtain went up on an 11-episode Historical Pageant. It was a John B. Rogers production directed by Miss Lucille Elwood. The John B. Rogers Producing Co. was the acknowledged leader in the pageant field.

The Fort Atkinson pageant depicted the founding of Fort Atkinson and everything that had come before. The first episode was entitled "The Dawn of Creation," and featured a ballet with 45 ballerinas as nymphs announcing creation and eventually the birth of man.

One respondent to the question, "What do you remember about the centennial," said she remembered a rather stout nymph who was a friend of her mother. As the said nymph got older, she also got stoutier — but her "informant" always thought of her as a nymph floating on the stage, which made propriety a bit of a problem as the years went on.

The pageant went on to tell of Indians, soldiers, early settlers, schools, town meetings, the railroad, Gov. W.D. Hoard, industrial and agricultural development and, in episode 11, the Masque of Nations and Grand Finale.

(Continued on page 12)
Wisconsin Territory
charted 150 years ago

By the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

In the earliest years of Wisconsin's first Capitol was being used as a barn and the territorial Supreme Court building served as a farmhouse and later a barn.

Both were located in what is now Leslie, then known as Belmont, in La Crosse County. The courthouse had been in use since 1836 to serve as the first judicial meeting places for the new Wisconsin territorial government.

In December, the Territory's first territorial government had been signed into existence by President Andrew Jackson on April 20, 1836, and included what today is Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and portions of North and South Dakota. The population was 22,218, of which 11,683 lived in Wisconsin, most of them in the far southern Wisconsin region.

Henry Dodge, appointed the first territorial governor, chose Belmont — the beautiful mound — as the location of the Territory's Capitol. A quiet spot in Lafayette County in the populous lead mining region, Belmont had only recently been platted as a village.

One of the leading promoters of the village was James Atkinson, a surveyor and land speculator from Galena, Ill., who had purchased 80 acres in Belmont. He quickly erected several buildings to accommodate the legislators — all to be rented from him for a fee — including a council house or Capitol, and a lodging house for the members of the Legislature.

The lumber for the buildings was purchased in Pittsburgh and brought down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi by steamboat to Galena and then hauled by wagon 30 miles to Belmont.

The Capitol building was a two-story structure with a belfry and a clapboard exterior, measuring 25 by 42 feet. The interior of the frame building had lathes with split oak and plastered — a substantial building in the popular style of the Western frontier.

The four buildings lining Belmont's new, stump-studded main street were soon joined by a tavern, grocery, blacksmith shop, variety shop and a few other residences. The Legislature met at Belmont on Oct. 25, 1836. The council had 13 members, and the assembly, 26 men. Salaries were paid by the federal government, but the Legislature received $1,000 a year and the legislators earned $3 each for the session.

Territorial lawmakers spent much time talking about a new and permanent Capitol. Fifteen cities or locations in Wisconsin were suggested. Charles Dunn promoted a site in the Village called “baulk landing” and the Legislature passed the division act giving the names “Jefferson” to the town and “Watertown” to the Johnson Rapids settlement.

It created five townships: Astiaian, Bark River, Finch, Jefferson and Watertown. The county seat at Jefferson was approved in 1837.

According to “The History of Jefferson County,” “In the fall of 1837, a petition was presented to the Legislature, praying for the location of the county seat on a point between the two rivers. Instead, it was located at its present site ... the prayer of the petitioners was signed by Judge Jan. 12, 1838, but it was a time after this that the commissioners obtained a certified copy of the name, which when received was found to contain a blank for the name, which Capt. Robert Masters filled up with ‘Jefferson’, the remaining commissioners consenting.”

By the 1830s, Watertown had become the second-largest city in the state and Mayor William Chappell, a member of the legislature, decided his city should be the county seat. He introduced a bill and, to assure his view would win, started litigation to authorize annexation of Jefferson County by Milwaukee County on the pretext that Dodge County’s land area exceeded its legal rights.

However, a suit brought by the county clerk charged that Chappell’s attempt was unconstitutional. Meanwhile, a vote was scheduled for Dodge and Jefferson counties in December 1836. “Whether you shall transact your business at the geographical center of the county or at the northern extreme the latter at a much greater expense of time and money,” the weekly Jeffersonian newspaper stated in a rather biased article in its Dec. 11, 1836, issue.

“Pull two-thirds of Jefferson County would be nearer, and one-third of the balance quite near the county seat at Jefferson as at Water town, while the hotel charges are at least 50 percent less; hence, it will plainly be seen by every voter who has the least respect for his pocket that it is to his interest to have it remain where it now is.

“All we have to say is, be true to your own interest, do not suffer yourself to be blinded by the deceitful reasonings of interested (pecuniary) men, but above all, vote on Tuesday next pro or con without fail.”

Election Day came and both sides were guilty of voting irregularities. The proceedings made considerable use of the “Krumenauer Poling Place,” a farm east of Jefferson. Popular legend says that voters cast ballots with their real names and then returned to cast them with names lifted from the Cincinnati City Directory.

Even so, Watertown won 4,518 to 2,545: Jefferson then proposed a new county, but that failed. In January 1837, the county board met in Watertown. However, later that year the State Supreme Court decided against Chappell’s annexation scheme and invalidated the election results.

The rest is history.

By Christine Blumer

Jefferson County spreads the word

Although it’s hard to spell and even more difficult to pronounce, “sesquicentennial” is a pretty well-known word around Jefferson County these days.

For 1898 is the 150th birthday of the founding of several area communities — Fort Atkinson, Watertown, Lake Mills, etc. — and the town of Beloit.

A small audience was present to witness the event.

Jefferson County was founded on April 20, 1836. It was originally part of the Illinois Territory, and the first county in Wisconsin.

The land on which Jefferson County lies was ceded to the government by the Indians following the Black Hawk War of 1832. The government divided the Northwest Territory into 400-acre townships, and sold them for $1.25 an acre.

In December 1836, a group of men, including Solomon Jenean, E.W. Edgerton, Henry Hooper, T.A. Holmes, Milo Jones and a guide, LaTroupe, left Milwaukee in search of mill sites to claim in the name of the Rock River Land and Claim Co. They regathered the first time claiming in what was to become Jefferson County.

The first included the water power site of Bark River and the second, at Fort Koskonom. The third was discovered at the forks of the Rock and Crawfish Rivers at Jefferson.

In September 1834, Milwaukee County had been set off from Brown County by an act of the Michigan Legislature. The new county included what today is Jefferson County.

However, it was not until 1839 that the legislators settled on Jefferson County and officially provided for county government.

At the petition of Patrick, Peter James Ragan, Judge Hyer and others originally from the Illinois Territory, the Legislature passed the division act giving the names “Jefferson” to the county and “Watertown” to the Johnson Rapids settlement.

It created five townships: Astiaian, Bark River, Finch, Jefferson and Watertown. The county seat at Jefferson was approved in 1837.

Accordin
Fort Atkinson marked century in 1936

(Continued from page 10)
It was advertised with a cast of 400, authentic costumes, bands, 100-voice choir, monster stage with 3,500 seats, special lighting, loudspeaker system — all at a cost of only 25 cents per person. What a bargain!

Probably two displays arranged for the special cultural had a lasting impact on Fort Atkinson. Both were arranged by Zida C. Ivey, the first museum curator.

First, a call went out for items of interest for a special centennial exhibit to be displayed at the museum, which was located in the library basement. Also, there was a special appeal for glass and china to be loaned for a special exhibit.

There is a list of more than 350 persons who stopped in at the museum to view those two exhibits during the centennial festivities.

The biggest historical exhibit of all was up and down Main Street in the business windows. Each store, tavern, bank and business, displayed artifacts of similar businesses of the good old days. Some displays were more elaborate than others, but walking up and down Main Street and gazing at the more than 50 exhibits was like strolling through a huge outdoor museum.

Ivey had given advice to help many. This was the way to help locate many of the items that are still a part of the museum collection today.

So, in the words of the Fort Atkinson News, "In a style peculiarly its own, Fort Atkinson becomes interested in a project at the proper time and, once interested, succeeds in maintaining its enthusiasm at a warm glow until the project has been completed.'

Living up to its reputation of being the little city that does things in a big way, Fort Atkinson observed the 100th anniversary of its founding in style.

Our Pioneers
By Mrs. C. L. Goodrich

From the banks of old Rock River
To the shores of Koshkonong,
Reverently we lend our voices
In a dedication song.
Humblly do we offer tribute,
To each honored pioneer,
Who through hardships and privation,
Helped to found a city here.

Fort Atkinson! Fort Atkinson!
Pride of the Rock River valley,
To her fair women and brave men
For heroic deeds we rally!

Men tramped all way from
Milwaukee
To this virgin wilderness
Blazed unknowingly a trail,
For a Century of Progress
They fought pestilence and Indians,
Lived on scanty, meager fare
But newcomers were made welcome
Their log cabin homes to share.

CHORUS
So this history-making epoch
Legends, these
gives us many treasured landmarks
Romance of a century!
Gen. Atkinson and Black Hawk
Furnish local color here.

But this day belongs entirely
To the hardy pioneer.

CHORUS

Wisconsin Territory also 150

(Continued from page 11)
raised when it was discovered that the Capitol cost twice as much to build as had been estimated — and that the roof leaked even at that price.

By 1846, the hogs had been evicted and legislative officers were constructed in the basement, an $800 gothic brick outhouse added and $150 worth of trees planted by the Capitol superintendent.

During the 1840s and 1850s, the population skyrocketed and so did the size of government. The second Capitol was soon filled and in 1857 work began on a third Capitol building. When this was destroyed by fire in 1904, the current Capitol was erected on the site.

In Belmont, the first Capitol building survived and was used as a residence by several families until about 1878, when it was moved 300 feet south and used as a barn. The Supreme Court building was adapted by Supreme Court Judge Charles Dunn into a residence, where he lived for many years. Later it became a farmhouse, and then, like the Capitol, a barn.

In 1868, citizens of Wisconsin became concerned about the fate of the old territorial Capitol building, and the secretary of State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Reuben G. Thwaites, visited the site and strongly recommended its restoration. In 1910, the Wisconsin Federation of Women’s Clubs purchased the original site of the first Capitol, which was later transferred to the state.

Seven years later, the Wisconsin Legislature appropriated $3,000 to purchase two acres of land and the first Capitol and to restore the building to its original condition. In 1919, the first Capitol building was purchased, moved and restoration began. The framework of the building was found to be surprisingly solid; one portion of the sill had to be replaced, the lower floor had to be substantially restored, and the missing battlement facade had to be reconstructed.

In 1921, the Legislature appropriated an additional $5,250 for the completion of the restoration and for the improvement of the park that surrounded the building. The restored first Capitol was dedicated before a crowd of 15,000 on June 1, 1924, as a state park.

Retrieved, perhaps appropriately, from the fate of a barn on a Wisconsin dairy farm, this simple, white clapboard building once again stands at the site of old Belmont, the first Capitol of the Territory of Wisconsin, the most vivid reminder on the landscape of the earliest activities in Wisconsin 150 years ago.

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1888 wedding 'brilliant affair'

The marriage of Miss Eva Levy, daughter of M. Levy, Fort Atkinson, to Mr. Phil Hammel, a brother of Hon. Leo Hammel, Milwaukee, took place at the city hall Wednesday evening, at 3 o’clock. The affair was on a scale of magnificence never before attempted in Fort Atkinson.

There were numbering about 120 were nearly all from abroad, and the Higbee House was necessarily brought into requisition. The German area was engaged to play at the reception and led Jewish feet through the maze of Waltzes and quadrilles, till old Sol proclaimed another day.

A splendid supper was served in the hall, at which a score or more of roasted geese and half as many turkeys were made to figure.

A member of the family estimated the expense of the wedding, including the furnishing of the house for the happy pair at Kaukauna, as between $2,500 and $3,000. The Israelites take great pride in their children, and a brilliant wedding is always arranged if the finances will so allow.

The bride is a charming Jewess, and was quite popular among her acquaintances. The groom is a promising young merchant at Kaukauna, and receives a start in life in the form of a $2,000 check from his father. — Oct. 5, 1888.