CHAPTER II

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

The lands of any country are important for the human opportunity they represent. The use which is made of them depends upon the people who come into their possession. For long ages the lands of Wisconsin made their mute and ineffective appeal to the natives. Then came a few French who were intent mainly upon trade such as the wild life of forest, stream, and swamp would yield when exploited by native huntsmen and trappers. Small, haphazard settlements grouped about the trading posts, especially those at Green Bay and Prairie du Chien, were all the French contributed toward the actual taming of the wilderness, their numbers being too restricted to build a New France between the Great Lakes and the Father of Waters.¹

The British occupation of the territory, after the treaty of Paris, 1763, was practically an extension of the fur trading era and need not, any more than the French, concern this story of the agricultural development of Wisconsin. Both French and English transmitted important benefits to the later sovereigns of the soil, though not in the way of its cultivation. Their most valuable contributions lay in the exploration of the country, the mapping and testing of its communication lines, and the partial description of its resources. Even the precarious settlements they maintained were indirectly useful to American pioneer farmers for their service of supply; and their influence, with some exceptions, tended to make the

¹The early, romantic period of Wisconsin is well treated, in brief form, in Reuben G. Thwaites, Wisconsin (Boston, 1908), and more fully in Louise Phelps Kellogg, Early Wisconsin (in preparation). Dr. Kellogg has published a shorter study of Wisconsin, 1634–1848, in the Wisconsin Magazine of History, volumes ii and iii.
Indians a support rather than a hindrance to agricultural settlers.  

When American settlement began, it was not at first agricultural. Instead of the attractions of prairie and opening, it was the subtler lure of underground mineral wealth which attracted the first few thousand. They came with the eager impetuosity which always characterizes the "rush" to new mining districts. The lead region occupied that portion of the Driftless Area (see Fig. 8) which is underlain by the Galena-Blackriver formation. This includes the counties of Grant, Lafayette, Iowa, and a portion of Green in Wisconsin, also Jo Daviess in Illinois and Dubuque in Iowa.

The lead, zinc sulphate, and zinc carbonate, familiarly called by miners "mineral," "blackjack," and "drybone," occur mainly in rock crevices or pockets which exist in the Galena phase of the Galena-Blackriver limestone. Sometimes deposits are found in the Blackriver also and, very rarely, in others above and below. By locating the eastern boundary of the Driftless Area, and noting the northward and westward projection of the Galena-Blackriver formation, the area of the lead deposits can be readily determined.

The lead deposits were known by the French as early at least as 1687; mines near the present Galena were shown on French maps from the first years of the eighteenth century, and the mines of that district were actually worked, though by crude methods, during that period. From that time until about 1819 the story of lead mining is a chequered one—French, Indians, Spanish, and a few English and Americans participating in it. Julien Dubuque, from his "Spanish Mines" across the river, had exploited the Galena district with the aid of Indians for many years prior to his death in 1810. But when the United States took control under an

---

*This is particularly true of the French influence. On account of the War of 1812, the later British influence was directly unfavorable though the trade of both French and English tended naturally toward the pacification of the Indians.

FIG. 8. THE LEAD REGION
After Owens' Geological chart, 1839; drawn by Mary Stuart Foster
agreement with the Indian claimants of the land in 1819, when Jesse W. Shull, James Johnston of Kentucky, and others began mining systematically, a new era opened for the lead mines. In a few years the richness of the deposits came to be widely known, especially among the people of southern Illinois, Missouri, and Kentucky, and the mining community was augmented by every steamboat ascending the Mississippi to Fever River (Galena). In 1826 and 1827 several hundred came. They spread up through the Wisconsin district, reaching the northern limits of the lead region before 1829. A map published at Galena in 1829 shows how the main "diggings" were distributed. A It shows also beginnings of towns in names like New Diggings, Shullsburg, Cassville, Platteville, Dodgeville, and especially Mineral Point, the acknowledged center of the Wisconsin lead district. It shows trails into the lead region from southern Illinois and from Chicago, and trails out to Green Bay, Fort Winnebago, and Fort Crawford, to Arena and English Prairie (Muscoda) on the Wisconsin, and to Cassville on the Mississippi. Galena was still the main local trade center for the entire northern lead region, while St. Louis was its commercial metropolis.

A serious interruption of the prosperity of the miners was caused by the Black Hawk War of 1832, in which numbers of them volunteered for military duty. But its result was the extinction of the Indian title to practically all of the lands comprising southern Wisconsin as defined by the Illinois boundary, Lake Michigan, and the line of Green Bay, Fox River, and Wisconsin River to the Mississippi, thence that river to the Illinois line. A

The mining community, being already well established, resumed its activity after the war and continued to develop in a notable manner for several years prior to the settlement of other sections of Wisconsin. A census in 1836 assigns to the

4 See Reuben G. Thwaites, "'Notes on Early Lead Mining,'" in Wisconsin Historical Collections, xiii, 271–292; also map of lead region in ibid., xi, 400.

5 For an account of the war and the treaties, see Reuben G. Thwaites, Wisconsin, chap. ix.
territory 11,683 persons. Of these the county of Iowa, which at that time included also the later Lafayette and Grant counties—essentially the lead region—had 5234. Brown County, comprising the entire Green Bay region, the Fox River valley, and Lake Winnebago, had 2706. Crawford County, which was settled only in the neighborhood of Prairie du Chien, had 850. These three constituted the established settlements, and it will be seen that the lead region was more populous by 1678 persons than the other two counties combined. The other area showing settlements, all practically new, was Milwaukee County, which embraced the entire southeastern portion of Wisconsin (see Fig. 9). These scattering communities, hardly a year old, numbered 2893 persons. To this new region we must now direct attention.

As soon as the Indian cessions were made, in 1832-33, government surveyors entered Wisconsin. Beginning at the Illinois boundary as a base line, they ran the Fourth Principal Meridian due north through the heart of the lead region to Wisconsin River. Then they laid off ranges of townships on both sides of the line, always terminating, for the time, at the Wisconsin-Fox River boundary. By the end of the year 1835 the map of that part of the state, the older Wisconsin, was chequered with the surveyors' townships except in the southeastern part, which was surveyed in 1836 (see Fig. 10).

But the work of the government surveyors meant much more to settlers than the mere locating of township lines and section lines. The surveyors made the first detailed examination of the land, recording their estimates of its quality—whether first class, second class, or third class—described the surface as level, rolling, rough and broken, or swampy, and indicated the kinds and the comparative density of the timber along the lines surveyed. They located the oak openings, the prairies, high rolling prairies, low wet prairies, level dry

---

*That meridian was afterwards made the boundary between Grant County and Iowa and Lafayette counties. Ranges of townships in Wisconsin are numbered west and east of that meridian.*
FIG. 9. MAP OF COUNTIES IN 1836
prairies, etc. In a word, they noted the points about the lands surveyed which settlers were most keen to know, and this information could be procured by land seekers, at slight expense for copying, from the government land office. Armed with copies of the surveyors’ plats and transcripts of his notes, the land seeker was equipped for the arduous task of selecting favorable locations for the opening of new farms, while the speculator was enabled by their means to choose likely town sites, mill sites, or lands that might soon be wanted for agricultural purposes. Some of the surveyors themselves were tempted to speculate in the lands they knew so well, and no doubt their special knowledge was often placed at the service of friends.

Accordingly, when in 1834 the government established two land offices for western Michigan Territory—one at Green Bay and one at Mineral Point—a ‘‘land office business’’ in the sale of lands to speculators began at once. They bought up river frontage where steamer landings prophesied the establishment of river towns; they secured for town sites valley lands at junctions of streams; water powers were eagerly sought out and the lands about them entered; while timbered strips along the rivers, in the prairie regions, or other fine groves, which would be needed by later farmers, were bought up in the confident expectation of their prompt and advantageous sale to settlers.


8 The surveyors were usually men of fairly good scientific training and were keen observers. Some of them, like Lucius Lyon, afterwards United States senator from Michigan, attained distinction in political life. A surveying party usually consisted of the surveyor, an ax-man, and two chainmen. The State Land Office at Madison has a complete collection of the notebooks of Wisconsin land surveyors, also all original survey plats. The romance of the land surveying period has almost wholly escaped the American novelist.

9 The land office tract books contain the records of sales. When these are compared with the surveyors’ plats and notes, the story of speculation is revealed, and one sees usually just what advantage the speculator sought to secure when he located his land. Names of many distinguished Americans appear on the plats of Wisconsin lands. We note among them Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, Caleb Cushing, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Timbered lands in western New York, in 1830, were considered quite as valuable as the best farming lands. So there was seen to be good business sense in buying timbered lands.
However, the speculative furore, which temporarily collapsed with the panic of 1837, expended itself mainly in the western ranges of townships surveyed early, and thus the splendid farming territory now embraced in Rock, Walworth, Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Jefferson counties remained almost wholly open to the selections of prospective settlers.

Settlement in the southeastern counties of Wisconsin forms an excellent commentary on the process of settling the wild lands of the country as a whole. Theoretically, it might seem as if the lands would have been taken first directly along the lake front wherever ports were within reach, and thereafter the belt of settlement would gradually widen away into the interior, the means of communication being created as fast as the increments of new settlement required. In fact, no such regularity in settling a new country has ever been observed. The geographic and social facts which imparted their impulses to the agricultural occupation of southeastern Wisconsin were mainly three: first, the existence of the lead mining region of northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin, whose interests tended to converge upon the Mississippi and Rock rivers; second, Chicago, city of destiny, building up near the foot of Lake Michigan and eagerly seeking ways of concentrating lake trade at that port; third, the foresight shown by the builders of Milwaukee, that for successful rivalry with Chicago their port must establish roads, canals, or other means of drawing commerce from the interior.

The lead mines themselves constituted at first no inconsiderable market for agricultural produce, and it is not surprising that farmers should have desired the fine prairie lands in the vicinity of Rock River, particularly in the days when the navigability of that stream for steamboats was almost an article of religious faith. Rock River was a tributary of the Mississippi, and the entire lead region continued for a number

10 In 1843, by the act of August 3, the lead miners were permitted to purchase their claims. Thereafter farming became a more important feature of life in the lead region.
of years to look to St. Louis as their metropolis. But Milwauk ee's builders saw the significance of the Rock River valley, as well as the mines, and promptly projected their Milwaukee and Rock River Canal, which, although it ultimately failed, had a powerful effect in directing settlement along designated lines, promoting road building, and binding the interests of large areas occupied by new communities to the lake port at Milwaukee.

Fox River (or the Pishtaka) is a branch of the Illinois. The lower portions of its valley, within the state of Illinois, began to be settled almost as soon as the discussions in the Illinois legislature advertised the prospect of a canal connecting the lake at Chicago with Illinois River. Such a canal would open out a market by the lakes, while Illinois River, like the Rock, connected with the Mississippi. Fox River itself was supposed to be navigable for flat-bottomed boats as far as Rochester in Racine County, fifty-four miles by a direct course from the Illinois line. To a generation which still relied on the flatboat as a means of marketing its surplus products, farming in the vicinity of such a stream, even without a canal, seemed a reasonably safe, normal manner of life.

So it was that pioneers ascended Fox River, marking out claims at attractive points; others ascended Rock River or reached it overland from Chicago by the prairie trails almost as early as the founders of Racine and Kenosha took cognizance of the promising lake ports south of Milwaukee. And once a lodgment was effected in the river valleys themselves, the intervening prairies and openings were scoured for mill sites, town sites, and the choicest farming situations, all in advance of the construction of roads or the canals which promoters were promising. But the land office records show that, in general, the farm locations fixed upon had a very definite relation to prospective improvements like canals, roads, and

11See Vanderpoel's letter in Racine Argus, June 2, 1838. Fine description of two beautiful farm sites already occupied in 1837 in the district between Fox and Rock rivers.
later, railroads, or to existing facilities for marketing products, especially by the rivers.

The movement which resulted in the first occupation of the southeastern counties began in 1835. It attained considerable vigor in 1836 and 1837, and by the end of the year 1839 the region may be considered settled, though much good land was to be had for some time thereafter. It was a movement in which hundreds were engaged at the same time, and while some localities were occupied a little earlier and some a little later, as the local histories show, for the purposes of this general statement it is sufficient to regard the principal settlements as having taken place about the same time. These principal settlements were near the lake shore, from the southeast corner of Kenosha County north almost continuously to the Milwaukee County line; along Fox River in both Kenosha and Racine counties;\(^{12}\) along Rock River, near Beloit, Janesville, and farther north, also west of the river, on the prairie; at Lake Geneva, Troy Lake, Whitewater, Delavan, Spring Prairie, Elkhorn Prairie, etc. in Walworth County. The Fox River line was followed northward into Waukesha County, as was the line of Rock River and its tributaries, and the proposed canal, into both Waukesha and Jefferson counties, settlers always being guided by the opportunity of securing ideal locations near the natural or artificial lines of communication and transportation.

It is possible with the aid of the records of entries and purchases, with the surveyors' description of the land, the topographical charts prepared for some areas by the United States Geological Survey, and the soil surveys (available in a few cases) to exhibit minutely the settlers' choices among kinds of land. A good illustration is township 3, range 22 east, which is a part of the town of Mount Pleasant, in Racine County, whose eastern boundary is Lake Michigan and which contains the port of Racine. The chart (Fig. 11) shows that the eastern ranges of sections were taken up at the earliest possible time,

\(^{12}\) Kenosha County was set off from Racine County in 1850.
FIG. 11. LAND ENTRIES, RACINE COUNTY
in 1838-39, the first land sale at the Milwaukee land office. Some of the southern sections and some of the northern sections were taken at the same time, together with small detached areas elsewhere; but the great body of land in the western and central portions of the township was left for later purchase, some of it going as late as 1846. According to the surveyor, the land which was shunned by the earliest comers was quite as good, on the whole, as that which was taken first. Why was it left?

The township in question is a prairie township. Most of the land is described by the surveyor as high prairie and the contour lines on the topographic chart show lowlands in only two principal areas, both of them narrow and inconsiderable as compared with the broad ridges. A few small depressions occur in the prairies themselves. Within the easternmost of the long low strips—the one along the course of Pike River and above its head—are the only extensive marshes in the township, though a smaller marsh occupies the second trench, in sections 8, 9, and 17. There are practically no openings, though patches of forest relieve the otherwise undiversified prairie character of the land. The chart indicates, generally, the distribution of forest, high prairie, low prairie or meadow, and marsh land. All of the sections in the easternmost range had some timber on them except 12, and a body of timber lay just east of that section. There was also timber in 35, 31, a little in 30, a considerable body in 3 and 4, 9 and 10. Sections 6 and 7 abutted on a "grove" in township 3, range 21 east. A road, hardly better than a trail at the outset, crossed diagonally from section 35 to section 1—the so-called Chicago-Green Bay road. At an early date also another territorial road was opened through the northern part of the town from east to west. The marshes along Pike River may be considered an obstacle to easy road making from the main road into the central portion of the township, but this obstacle disappears at the south as well as at the north.
Our land-entries cards show that the easternmost range of sections and the easternmost half of the next range were entered at once on the opening of these lands to sale. Beyond that, the purchases were sporadic. They included low ground, but not the lowest, along Pike River—lands which adjoined the preferred sections—also some other low land in the south, the timbered tract in section 31, three tracts toward the northwest which had timber at their western margin, and all of the big grove in the north, with some tracts of adjacent prairie. But the big, open,unsheltered prairie occupying the middle and western portions of the township was left for several years as "cow commons" for the farms ranged around it.

The facts brought out in this study are reinforced by those which emerge in the study of other towns. They show that the early pioneers appreciated timber when found, in sparse measure, in a prairie region. They loved to build their homes in the shelter of woods. They preferred a tract of woodland as a portion of their holdings, but at any rate they wanted wood within easy reach. For plow land they chose the high prairie because it was well drained, or land of the same character in the openings. If they could have this as the main portion of their farms, with forty or eighty acres of timber and an equal quantity of low prairie or meadow, they were content. Those who entered a new region early enough to pick and choose, invariably selected lands which gave them these three elements of fundamental utility. The first claim takers in Mount Pleasant obtained them approximately. Later comers, observing that the vacant lands were too exclusively prairie, swerved off toward Fox River, or took the prairie trails to Rock River, or went up into Jefferson, Waukesha, or Dane County in order to lay the foundations of their farms in the right kinds of land properly distributed. It was only when they began to realize the counter disadvantage involved in hauling their surplus wheat twenty, thirty, fifty, or one hundred miles over heavy roads to the lake ports (which they

---

13 Most of those lands, to be sure, had been "claimed" and settled upon earlier, some as early as 1835, the bulk of them in '36, '37, and '38.
in the beginning hoped to avoid by shipping on rivers and canals), that they saw the possibilities in the left-over lands lying within eight or ten miles of such ports. Then the big prairie in Mount Pleasant was promptly taken up, and by the end of 1846 there was nothing left except the school section and a few small pieces of swale land.

It is noteworthy that nearly all those who entered government lands thus early, in Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, and Rock counties, bore names which show their possessors to have been Americans, or at least English speaking persons. And the testimony of those who describe the early settlements is that the people were mostly from New York and New England. The testimony of the census is to the same effect. For example, in 1850 Mount Pleasant in Racine County had a population of 1101; of that number, 842 were native born, 259 foreign. There were 144 American families and only 48 foreign families. Similar statistics are obtained for Whitewater in Walworth County, which had 992 American and 234 foreign born. In Plymouth, Rock County, were 377 American born persons, and 194 foreign born. The county of Racine in 1850 had a total population of 15,004, with 8867 natives and 6083 foreign born. Kenosha County's figures were 10,735 native and 3383 foreign born, while Walworth had 14,865 to 2787 and Rock 16,435 to 4201. These statistics show a great preponderance of native born in those counties taken as a whole.

Going north to Milwaukee County and to Washington County the case is different. In 1850 Milwaukee County had 18,229 foreign born as against 12,685 native, while Washington County had 12,100 foreign and 7252 native.

Thus it appears that some condition, which in Washington County at least could not have been the presence of an impor-

14 Many of the early settlers left New York and Vermont at a time when new canal projects were being prosecuted to completion almost yearly. It is little wonder they should have faith in a project as seemingly feasible as the Milwaukee and Rock River Canal.

15 I am using, in the county statistics, the results of a hand count made for the Society by Dr. M. M. Quaife, with an assistant.
tant town, was causing the northern counties to be settled largely by people of foreign birth. A study of the land entries for the town of Franklin, Milwaukee County, shows that the earliest entries were made mainly by English speaking persons who, in rather numerous cases, were Irish or of Irish descent. But many of the American entrymen appear to have bought for speculative purposes, or at least decided in a few years to sell their lands, for the transfers became numerous in the forties, and by 1850 there were only 15 American families to 285 foreign.\textsuperscript{16} The foreigners included 282 persons born in Germany, 292 born in Ireland, and 39 in Holland. All other countries furnished 58.

The one significant contrast between the lands of Racine County and those of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, and Washington counties is that the former are prairies and openings, with some dense groves; the latter are heavily forested for the most part. It might seem from this that American settlers preferred the more open lands, while immigrants from foreign lands preferred to begin in the woods. The case, however, is not so simple. We have already seen that the ideal farm, to the American settler, was a combination of timber, prairie or opening, and marsh—for fuel and shelter, cultivation, and hay or pasture. Now, the above is precisely the "ideal farm" for the ambitious immigrant as well as for the native. William Dames, an intelligent German immigrant of 1848, after much search found such an ideal tract. It had, he says, "160 acres in prairie, 320 acres openings and 160 acres meadow together with some marsh along the shores of Rush Lake.\textsuperscript{17} The same writer speaks of the "murderous toil" of clearing a farm in the heavy timber, which he regards as a life job for the unfortunate settler. Why, then, did so many German immigrants elect to spend their lives in making farms under those conditions?

\textsuperscript{16}In this count the family is classified by the birthplace of its head. Frequently the children of foreign parents were natives.

\textsuperscript{17}William Dames, \textit{Wie Sicht es in Wiskonsin Aus} (1848).
The answer is found, by analogy, in this other question: Why do the poorer people, in every crowded city, live on the low grounds, while the well-to-do occupy the high, commanding, and sightly knolls? It is at bottom a question of economic ability, not of personal or racial tastes. The poorer immigrants and the poorer natives also, with of course many exceptions, settled in the woods because they could not afford to encounter the risk of taking an ideal farm in the “Congress land” districts, nor could they afford to buy such land from speculators or from farmers. They took what was at hand, the heavily wooded lands avoided by persons who were in position to pick and choose. In many cases they might have found lands on the open prairies, which, as we saw, were taken later than the other lands even by Americans who had some means. But the person without means would have been helpless in such a situation. He would need money to buy lumber both for building and for fencing, while in the timber his personal labor supplied these essentials, without cost, in the process which at the same time cleared his land. Besides, the timbered areas near Milwaukee had the advantage of a good market not only for the agricultural products to be raised after the work of clearing was done, but even for some of the incidental products of clearing, like cord-wood, pot and pearl ashes, charcoal, and later, railway ties. Where the timber was largely or partly merchantable pine or cedar, as in the counties north of Milwaukee along the lake, the saw-mills and shingle mills furnished a market. Thus the settler on a woods claim, if physically equal to the labor involved, might hope to supply his family with necessities at least from the forest products of his farm, while extending, year by year, his cultivated area. In the end his farm might even be a better one than if it had been on the prairie, for a portion of it was always fresh land, and there is some reason to believe that farms rescued from the forest by dint of the indomitable labor of the pioneers are generally more highly appreciated by the
second and third generations than are the prairie farms.\textsuperscript{18} But the creation of such farms was an heroic process, entailing real hardships, unremitting toil, and privations for many years.

The forested area in the eastern portion of Wisconsin included the counties of Milwaukee, Washington, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Kewaunee, Door, Brown, Calumet, with parts of Fond du Lac, Dodge, Jefferson, and Waukesha. Of these, several, including Door and Kewaunee, were still unorganized in 1850, and there was but a small population in Brown, Manitowoc, and Calumet. The census count, however, assigns a large majority of foreign born not only to Milwaukee County, where the city had early attracted considerable numbers of Germans, but to Washington and Manitowoc also. The other counties of the group show native born majorities, though in Sheboygan, Brown, Fond du Lac, and Waukesha the foreign born number more than one-third of the total. On the other hand, the northern portion of the heavily forested area was a decade or more behind southeastern Wisconsin in its development. Manitowoc County, for example, where lumbering began very early, waited for the settlement of its farm lands on the heavy influx of Germans who arrived between 1848 and 1854, and the same population element pressed into parts of Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Brown, and other northern counties.

A study of the early maps will show how definitely the locations of agricultural settlements were determined by marketing possibilities. Captain T. J. Cram's map, 1839, reveals clearly that, outside of the mining region, the farm settlements were east of a line that followed Rock River to Watertown and ran thence north to Fond du Lac. But, in fact, only the portion of that strip which lay south of a line drawn from Watertown due east to the lake was actually settled except at intervals along Lake Michigan, if we except the beginnings of Fond du Lac itself and Oshkosh, with a few paper towns on

\textsuperscript{18} Joseph Schafer, "The Town of Newton, Manitowoc County," in \textit{Wis. Mag. of Hist.}, v. 144–159.
Lake Winnebago and, of course, Green Bay. To the west of our assumed line lay Madison, founded in 1837 as the capital of the Territory because its choice was the most satisfactory compromise between the lead mining region and the lake. There was not much farming done in that part of the Territory for a number of years, nor in the prairies and openings northward from Madison to Fox River, nor in all of the country north of the Military Road and west to the Mississippi. Such places as appear on the map along Wisconsin River—Prairie du Sac, Arena, Helena, "Muskoday"—have significance merely as trading points in relation to the lead mines, not in relation to an agricultural community.\(^{19}\) It was early discovered that, while the Mississippi steamers were an invaluable resource for bringing in necessaries, carrying away lead ore, etc., freight charges due to the difficulties of its navigation would prove prohibitive for shipping farm produce. Hence, only those living near enough to the lake ports to make possible the delivery of wheat, by team over execrable roads, could really farm. Settlers in Rock River valley marketed their crops in that manner for more than a decade. Yet, even they complained that on account of the cost of transportation, the more they had to sell, the poorer they became; while those living farther west had practically no outlet either south or east.\(^{20}\)

It was the coming of the railways which changed these untoward conditions and made farming a normal occupation beyond the limits of wagon transportation for farm products, at the same time giving a tremendous impulse to wheat raising in the southeastern counties by reducing the cost of marketing.\(^{21}\) The Milwaukee and Mississippi Railway, begun in

\(^{19}\) Helena was the place where Daniel Whitney’s shot tower was located. Lead brought there in wagons was cast and the shot carried away by steamer either via the Portage and Green Bay or via the Mississippi. Muscoda was the location of a smelter maintained at the river by William S. Hamilton. The lead was brought by a down-hill haul from the prairie to the south.


\(^{21}\) See Josiah F. Willard, in Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Transactions, 1853, 116.
1849, built gradually westward by short sections and sent its surveyors forward ahead of the construction parties. Our record of land entries shows that prospective settlers usually reached an area about to be tapped by the railway very soon after the surveyors had located the road. Many made purchases before the road was built, but not long before. Pioneering, for its own sake or as an expression of ingrained habit, was rather uncommon among the Easterners as well as among the foreigners who settled southern Wisconsin. All wanted land, however, and the railways into new regions multiplied opportunities to secure the kinds of land most desired. Hence the spaces noted as open in 1839 are no longer unoccupied on the map of 1853. Hence, also, some spaces north of the Wisconsin, in Crawford, Richland, and Sauk counties, are shown to be settled at the later date.

Since statehood was achieved in the year 1848, it is interesting to determine approximately how the agricultural settlements were distributed at that time. The political symbol of the rural settlement is the organized town, which usually, after a district of country became fully settled, was a surveyor's township six miles square. These towns were organized in the various counties as they were needed to accommodate the people. Sometimes, in the beginning of settlement, a district embracing several townships, or even a whole county, was made a town for local government purposes, to be subdivided as settlement thickened up. Hence, a map showing the organized towns with dates of their organization will describe the farming community of the state at the given date, and also show the progress of settlement. The accompanying map (Fig. 12) of southern Wisconsin shows (1) the surveyor's townships. (2) In heavily shaded figures, the organization of towns by the legislature to 1848. These early towns, as will be seen, generally embraced several townships, sometimes

22 In this respect conditions in early Wisconsin contrasted sharply with those in the early stages of community building in some of the other states, like Kentucky, southern Illinois, and Missouri. However, is it not possible that in American history we have generally overstressed the idea that men have chosen the life of backwoodsmen rather than accepted it as a matter of stern necessity?
entire counties. (3) In lighter shaded figures, the dates of organization of towns within older and more spacious towns. (4) Those portions, within the lines of the map, which remained unorganized as late as 1848, the date of the latest session laws examined in this study. All portions of the state falling outside of the lines of the map were unorganized. For example, the lead region, though longer settled, was not at this time organized into towns. This is generally attributed to the fact that the dominant element there was accustomed to the county form of local government. The constitution, however, provided for the uniform adoption of the town system over all the state, and the southwestern counties were soon accordingly subdivided into towns. However, as previously pointed out, the lead region was not primarily an agricultural section.

The figures, therefore, which are in all cases the last two digits of the number representing the year (as "38" for "1838"), constitute a fairly accurate picture of the manner in which settlement spread over the state and the rate at which it concentrated in given areas. The lines $a-b$ and $b-c$ enclose, with Lake Michigan and the Illinois boundary, the one great area which was sufficiently settled by 1838 to justify its subdivision into towns smaller than counties. That area embraces the counties of Walworth, Racine, Kenosha, also Milwaukee, Waukesha, and parts of Rock and Jefferson. Dane County, with Green and the northwestern part of Rock, remained undivided until 1846–47, portions of them longer. About Lake Winnebago were one town dating from 1840, two from 1842, and one from 1845. Aside from these, only two towns were organized prior to 1846 in the farming area north of the line $a-b$. Also, south of that line many of the separate erections came as late as 1845, 1846, and 1847 in the northwestern part, while in the east, south, and southwest portions of the region they generally came earlier. The towns around Green Bay took care of the organization of the old French-Canadian trading settlements. In none of the towns organ
ized prior to 1846, save three or four in western Rock County, were the farmers living at a greater distance than sixty miles, in a direct line, from the lake. Those who were farming along or near the northern border of southern Wisconsin found a temporary market in the lumbering districts near at hand.

The census map for 1850 reveals on the whole a similar result, but it does not discriminate between agricultural settlements and those incident to mining and lumbering. It shows an area along the lake coast, through Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee counties, which is peopled to the density of 45–90 to the square mile. That is of course due in part to the lake towns. The balance of what the preceding map shows to have been the farming area distinctively has 18–45. Most of the lead region, with considerable territory adjacent to it in the north and east, also the Sheboygan County area, has but 6–8. The rest, symbolizing merely pioneer beginnings north of the Wisconsin and near the river, the thinly populated old settlements about Green Bay, the several lumbering regions on the Wisconsin and the Chippewa, also on the Mississippi, and the Lake Superior colonies, has only 2–6 to the square mile. All of these areas except the lumbering tracts in the interior and those on the upper lake are located on the limestone formations.

SOURCES

In preparing this chapter I have used Ulysses S. Grant, *Lead and Zinc Deposits* (Madison, 1906); the *Collections* of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin; various items and volumes; and the *Wisconsin Domesday Book* plats and records, M.S., some of which are in press and will be issued as *Wisconsin Domesday Book, Town Studies*, I.