APPENDIX

A CENSUS OF OLD HOMESTEADS

Edited by Edna Louise Jacobson
A CENSUS OF OLD HOMESTEADS

In the December, 1920, issue of the Wisconsin History Bulletin, the State Historical Society addressed to the public through the newspapers of the state the following invitation and directions:

The State Historical Society wishes to obtain and publish a census of those farms sixty years old or more, which in this year 1920 are still in the families of the men and women who created them out of pieces of wild land. It matters not from whom the title originally came—whether the United States government, the state government, or a private owner. The only condition is that the land must have been improved or made into a farm by the present owner or one of his or her ancestors.

Owners of such family homesteads are requested to send in the requisite information about them without delay. For convenience in filing, the following form should be used:

1. Description of land [Example: NE/4 SE/4 Sec. 7. T. No. 8 R.2W].
2. Maker of the farm [Example: James W. Jones].
3. Date at which ownership began [Example: 1842].
5. Date of his settlement on the land [Example: 1843].
6. Proof of above statement as to date of settlement [Example: A letter written by the settler or some member of his family; some instrument or transaction which is of record; statement by original owner later in life; testimony of aged neighbors knowing the facts].
7. Name of present owner and relationship to original farmer [Example: Wesley G. Jones, grandson of James W. Jones].
8. If possible give a brief sketch of the original farmer, a photograph of him, and any photographs of the farm, with approximate dates.
9. Description of the present farm.
10. Date of report.

Kindly send information to State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

The response was immediate and for a time encouraging. A considerable amount of data drifted in during the succeeding three or four months, after which there was a lull and then a complete cessation of letters about ancestral farms. In August, 1922, the invitation was repeated and a new group of entries came in for record.
In preparing this first list for publication as an appendix to the History of Agriculture in Wisconsin, Miss Jacobson has selected from the data now in hand the most typical cases, distributed somewhat evenly among the counties represented. Others will appear, in groups, from time to time.

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin offers the opportunity to owners of such farms to make a permanent record, but it does not feel called upon to canvass the state for data. What we receive from persons interested will be recorded in due time and in such form as seems advisable.

JOSEPH SCHAEFER.

BROWN COUNTY


When Charles Williams left England in 1850, he came first to Canada, and in 1858 to Green Bay. The farm which he developed is situated on a state trunk highway about five miles from De Pere. During the first winter Mr. Williams earned a living cutting wood and hauling it with oxen over the trail which has since been converted into this modern concrete road.

MRS. M. A. BIDWELL, West De Pere.

CRAWFORD COUNTY


Michael Ward and his family came to Wisconsin from Dixon, Illinois, making the trip in the fall of 1858 with two yoke of oxen. They made a shelter of their carts and used them for houses until spring. The land comprising this homestead contains many fine springs.

W. M. WARD, Soldiers Grove.

DANE COUNTY


On his first trip to America, in 1843, Mr. Boning settled in Cincinnati. In 1850 he joined the California gold seekers, making the trip by way of Cape Horn. On his return he visited his native land, after a few years immigrating to Wisconsin and settling on the farm he now owns. He cleared and broke the land, erected all the farm buildings, and set out many ornamental trees.

HELEN BONING, Basco.


Sylvester Carpenter and his wife had for their first Wisconsin home a comfortable house of sawed lumber hauled from Milwaukee; this house is now used as a granary. Across the land lay a well worn Indian trail from Lake Koshkonong to the Madison lakes. The farm yielded in 1848 mainly wheat, gradually changing until now it is one of the finest tobacco farms in Dane County.

MARY HART, Oconomowoc.


The first house erected on the Chichester homestead was of logs; though small, it housed fourteen men who were working on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, which passed close to the farm. The log house was displaced in 1856 by a frame structure. The nearest market was Milwaukee, and to this place Mr. Chichester would haul his wheat by ox team and sell it for twenty-five or thirty cents a bushel.

MRS. C. E. ANTHONY.


In 1847 Youngs Hallock came to Wisconsin, and made his headquarters at Janesville while he and one John V. Cairns made land-seeking trips. His selection was not entirely a matter of choice, as much of the finest land could be bought only at a high price from speculators and Mr. Hallock’s means were rather limited. The original house and barn were of oak framework. These with additions are still in use.

MARY J. HALLOCK, Madison.


The old trail from Madison to Baraboo, used in early days, was within a few rods of the house. JOSEPH B. McCHESNEY, Dane.

DODGE COUNTY


In 1859 the Becker farm consisted of eighty acres, high and low land, which contained heavy timber and stones. Now the entire tract, with the exception of five acres reserved for pasture, is under cultivation, the low land tiled. The stones have been used in the making of a fence along the entire width of the farm.

PETER BECKER, Rubicon.

NILS ERICKSON HOMESTEAD. (1) Description of the land: Lot 5 and N part lot 6, Sec. 25; E part NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 25, all in T 9N, R 16E, Town of Lebanon. (2) Maker of farm: Nils Erickson, native of Hittesdal, Norway. (3) Origin of title: U. S. Govt. patent, 1844. (4) Date of settlement on the land: April, 1845. (5) Present owner: Erick Erickson, son of Nils Erickson. (6) Date of report: Jan. 18, 1921.

Mr. Erickson’s first Wisconsin home was at Pine Lake, near Nashotah, where he remained for three years; he then removed to Dodge County, to a farm consisting of rolling land with clay soil, on the west bank of Rock River.

ERIK ERICKSON, Ixia.

JOHN JONES HOMESTEAD. (1) Description of the land: E 1/2 SW 1/4 Sec. 9, T 9N, R 15E; N 70 A. W 1/4 SE 1/4 Sec. 9, T 9N, R 15E; E 1/2 NW 1/4 Sec. 18, T 9N, R 15E, Town of Emmet. (2) Maker of farm: John Jones. (3) Origin of title: U. S. Govt. patent, 1845. (4) Date of settlement on the land: 1845. (5) Present owner: David Jones, son of John Jones. (6) Date of report: Jan. 19, 1921.

Mr. Jones was looked upon as one of the leading farmers of his community. He took much interest in raising standard-bred horses and shorthorn cattle.

DAVID JONES, Watertown.

DOOR COUNTY


Robert Laurie was a ship carpenter in Scotland, and plied his trade for a time after coming, in 1852, to Buffalo, New York, whither his brother Alexander had preceded him. In 1853 they left Buffalo in a boat of their own making, to look for timbered land near the water. Robert obtained a soldier’s claim in Door County, on the shore of Sturgeon Bay, but did not
settle on it until the following year. He cleared land and burned lime in the summer time, and in winter worked in the ship yards at Little Sturgeon. Later he developed the stone trade, the Laurie Stone Company being the outcome.

Christine A. Laurie, Sturgeon Bay.

Grant County

David Gardner Homestead. (1) Description of the land: N 1/2 SW 1/4 SW 1/4, NW 1/2 SW 1/4, except part in NW corner lying NW of the road; NW 1/4 SE 1/4 SW 1/4; W 1/2 NE 1/4 SW 1/4; W 1/2 NE 1/4 NE 1/4 SW 1/4; SE 1/4 NW 1/4; part of W 1/2 SW 1/4 NW 1/4 lying E of highway passing through same, all in Sec. 21, T 3N, R 1W, Town of Platteville. (2) Maker of farm: David Gardner, native of county of Meath, Ireland; born 1818. (3) Origin of title: Purchase from Thomas Hugill and Major John H. Rountree, 1847. (4) Date of settlement on the land: 1842. (5) Present owners: John M. Gardner, Mary E. Gardner, Bee A. Gardner, Celia Gardner—children of David Gardner. (6) Date of report: Dec. 15, 1920.

When David Gardner emigrated to America he settled first at Grand Gulf, Mississippi. In 1836 he came up the Mississippi River to Ottawa, Illinois, where he remained until 1840, when he came to Platteville. In 1842 he built a double log house with an “upstairs”; a small frame addition was built some years later. The present farm consists of 132 2/3 acres, with a flowing well upon it.

D. J. Gardner, Platteville.


At the age of thirteen Jacob Hooser, Sr., came up the Mississippi as assistant cook on one of the first steamboats operating so far north on that river. He settled in Platteville, three years later removing to the farm described above. At the outbreak of the Black Hawk War he took his family to Galena and there enlisted. After the capture of Black Hawk he returned to Platteville, where he lived until his death.

D. J. Gardner, Platteville.

Jefferson County


In 1845 Lorenzo Dow Fargo joined a party bound for Wisconsin Territory, going by boat from Buffalo to Milwaukee. His brother Enoch, who accompanied him, had a new double wagon, and William Curre, also a fellow traveler, had a span of horses. To quote from Lorenzo Fargo’s Autobiography: “We joined forces, loaded in carpet bags and started for Lake
Mills. Milwaukee consisted of cheaply constructed residences, a few pioneer stores and shops. We drove on into the 12-mile forest of beech, maple, basswood, elm, ash and oak. The road pretended to be a highway; but was one stretch of dodging mud holes and trees and constantly repairing the corduroy road. The first night we spent in a little half-way house in Wauwatosa. The second at McVane’s double log hotel, where we paid fifty cents apiece for two square meals and lodging. Near Summit corners we had our first sight of a Wisconsin prairie and saw our first prairie chickens. Here was rich soil waiting for the pioneer’s big breaking plough to turn the furrows.

Aztalan was a booming town. On the third night, November 8, 1845, we reached Lake Mills and spent that night at the Morgan Bartlett hotel.

“In February, 1846, I bought out Lon Perry’s claim and went right to work getting out fencing.” Mr. Fargo gradually added to his farm until it embraced over 500 acres. He was a great lover of nature, and in his last years he “turned his time and strength to reforesting his own woods and by his pen endeavored to arouse the people to a realization of the importance and necessity of planting trees for future generations.”

The Lorenzo Dow Fargo Free Public Library of Lake Mills was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fargo to the city. Mrs. Carrie Fargo Bicknell, Los Angeles, Cal.

MANITOWOC COUNTY


George Goldie and his brother James emigrated to America in 1849, coming directly to Wisconsin, where they obtained land. They spent their winters clearing land, and their summers sailing the Great Lakes. In 1853 George Goldie abandoned sailing, built a log house, and devoted himself seriously to making a fine farm out of the wilderness.

George S. Goldie, Timothy.

John Stangel Homestead. (1) Description of the land: S ½ SE ¼ NW ¼, S½ SW ¼ NW ¼, NW ¼ SW ¼ Sec. 5; NE ¼ SE ¼ and SE ¼ SE ¼ Sec. 6, all in T 21N, R 24E, Town of Tisch Mills. (2) Maker of farm: John Stangel, native of Bohemia. (3) Origin of title: Claims received from the state in 1853, by Joseph Stangel, brother of John Stangel. (4) Date of settlement on the land: 1856. (5) Present owner: Wencel M. Stangel, son of John Stangel. (6) Date of report: July, 1921.

John Stangel and his wife took pride in the fact that they were owners of property, and labored untiringly to clear the land. When the government laid out its public roads, the Stangel homestead lay a quarter of a mile from the highway. A new site was therefore selected and buildings erected; the original house is still on the premises but is no longer used as a home. Mr. Stangel took a deep interest in education and religion. The records of the
school district show that he served as a school officer for several years. The first Catholic church in the locality in which he lived was constructed mainly from lumber which he donated.  

WENCHEL M. STANGEL, Tisch Mills.

PIERCE COUNTY


Isaac I. Foster was at one time county judge of Pierce County.

MRS. W. H. PUTNAM, River Falls.

RACINE COUNTY


The price of the twenty acres of land purchased from Horace Norton was the hauling of a hundred loads of charcoal and barrels that were made on the place. For the rest of the land Mr. Mohrbacher paid $4.50 an acre. The original farm buildings are still standing; the present owner has bought land nearer the main highway, upon which modern structures have been erected.

ADAM C. MOHRBACHER, Racine.

RICHLAND COUNTY


William Pickering left England in 1848 and came to Wisconsin for the purpose of owning a home—a goal he could not hope to reach in England. He believed that timber land would remain fertile longer than prairie land, and sought it first in the direction of Oshkosh. There he found that none other than pine land was subject to entry, and this he did not desire. He then retraced his steps toward Milwaukee and started westward. He learned that good land could be obtained in Eagle Township, and accordingly he entered the parcels described above—heavily timbered land nine miles north of Wisconsin River. Here he grappled with the forests and carved out a productive farm, in complete contrast with those farms of sandy soil on the south bank of the river.

C. R. PICKERING, Muscoda.

ST. CROIX COUNTY

S. H. BURR HOMESTEAD. (1) Description of the land: N ½ NW ¼,
N ½ NE ¼, N ½ SE ¼ Sec. 30, T 28N, R 18W, Town of Kinnickinnick.

Mr. Burr’s first home in the West was at Princeton, Illinois, where he remained for twenty-two years. His Wisconsin farm was only one and one-half miles from River Falls, and is today one of the most picturesque farms on the well-known Kinnickinnick trout stream. During the antislavery contentation Mr. Burr was a co-worker of Owen Lovejoy and a firm friend of the fugitive slave.

Mrs. C. W. Fuller, River Falls.


When Mr. Fuller bought his farm in the town of Kinnickinnick, about ten acres were cleared and there was a log house on it. Soon he put up a frame dwelling, hauling the lumber from Eau Galle. The nearest market was Hudson, fifteen miles distant. Mr. Fuller was a power in promoting whatever was best for his community.

Frank N. Fuller, River Falls.

SAUK COUNTY

SOLOMON KING HOMESTEAD. (1) Description of the land: NE ¼ NW ¼ and S ½ NW ¼ Sec. 3, T 10N, R 6E; W ½ SE ¼ and E ½ SW ¼ Sec. 34, T 11N, R 6E, all in the Town of Sumpter. (2) Maker of farm: Solomon King, native of Ohio. (3) Origin of title: U. S. Govt. patent and private purchase, 1848. (4) Date of settlement on the land: 1856. (5) Present owner: Elias D. King, son of Solomon King (all but three acres has been sold). (6) Date of report: Dec. 19, 1920.

The King homestead is unique in the following particulars:
1. It contains the “first circular silo on route 12 between Baraboo and Prairie du Sac.”
2. Its owner was the “first to use galvanized steel roofing, and also to use tiling for draining the farm.”
3. Its owner was the “first to practice subsoiling of land, which was done with profit.”

Elias D. King, Prairie du Sac.

WALWORTH COUNTY


Anson B. Warner paid $9.00 an acre for the land; the present owner would not sell it for $350 an acre. Originally the north half of the farm was covered with scattered oaks and hazel brush. Some of the remainder had been broken with an ox team, but the work had been so poorly done that it had to be done
again. A log house served as a home for the family for three years. This was replaced by a frame house which stood for fourteen years. The present brick house dates from about 1864.  

H. R. Warner, Whitewater.

WASHINGTON COUNTY


The Murray homestead is now a dairy farm. Three gravel pits are also a source of income.  

Merton W. Murray, West Bend.

WAUKESHA COUNTY

Jackson Kemper Homestead.  (1) Description of the land: NW 1/4 Sec. 18, T 7N, R 18E, Town of Merton, and lots 1 and 2 and NE fr. 1/4 Sec. 13, T 7N, R 17E, Town of Summit.  (2) Maker of the farm: Jackson Kemper, bishop of Wisconsin.  (3) Origin of title: In part from the Territory of Wisconsin by Henry Dodge, governor; a patent dated July 17, 1846; and a part from United States by patent January 1, 1850.  (4) Date of settlement on the land: 1846.  (5) Present owner: Mary Ann Kemper Lemon, granddaughter of Jackson Kemper.  (6) Date of report: Apr. 18, 1921.

Bishop Kemper’s farm was adjacent to Nashotah Mission. The road passing the house was a military road from Fort Dearborn to Fort Winnebago; it is said that Jefferson Davis laid it out and worked it. The road was also used by the lead miners of Galena, Illinois, who were often seen with four or six yoke of oxen hauling wagons loaded with pig lead.

The Bishop always employed a farmer to work the land. The house as it now stands consists of a frame portion built in 1846 and a stone addition erected in the early sixties. The Kemper home was for many years the center of hospitality for all connected with Nashotah House.  

Mrs. Charles H. Lemon, Milwaukee.