CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTIVE.

The territory embraced within the present limits of the county of Manitowoc is situated as follows:—from the shores of Lake Michigan on the east to Calumet County on the west and from Sheboygan County on the south to Brown and Kewaunee Counties on the north, all of the boundaries being regular with the exception of the lake line and also the northwestern corner where Brown County makes an indentation. The county lies in 44 degrees, 36 minutes, north latitude and its area is 612 square miles. It is divided into eighteen townships, the northern row being composed of Cooperstown, Gibson, Mishicott and Two Creeks, that next south of them, Maple Grove, Franklin, Kossuth and Two Rivers, then a tier composed of Rockland, Cato, Manitowoc Rapids and Manitowoc, south of them another, composed of Eaton, Liberty and Newton and the tier furthest south being made up of Schleswig, Meeme and Centreville. The largest of these is Kossuth which comprises forty sections of land, while the smallest are Two Creeks and Manitowoc, which contain about fifteen sections apiece. Cooperstown, Maple Grove, Franklin, Cato, Rockland, Rapids, Liberty, Eaton, Meeme and Schleswig correspond in size to the legal township, viz., thirty-six sections.
The county is all within the territory covered by the Lake Michigan glacier in prehistoric times, this fact having had its effect upon the conformation of the land. The latter is gradually sloping from the western boundaries to the lake, the Kettle Moraine which begins in Door County, traversing the western portion in a southwesterly direction, thus forming a watershed between the streams running into the Fox and its tributaries and those flowing into Lake Michigan. This range of hills extend in a loop through the south central part of the state, the western arm extending upwards as far as Langlade county. The underlying strata of the county are of rock of a variety which is denoted by geologists as Niagara limestone. Layers of this are exposed along the course of the West Twin River in the townships of Gibson and Cooperstown and several caves are there found. These attracted but little attention until the eighties, when, however, they became widely known as curious formations. The prevailing soil is clay strongly impregnated in places with limestone and with gravel in the northwestern part of the county. Sand is abundant along the river valleys and on the lake shore, the latter being particularly adapted for building purposes. The limestone is of a fine whitish variety and several quarries, notably at Grimms Station, have been opened in order to utilize the product. In some places it is of such a fine-grained quality that in an early day it was mistaken for marble. Thus a discovery of supposed marble upon the Nachway farm in the town of Gibson was once much heralded and several years before the Baker marbles were widely known, being named after the discoverer, a resident in the town of Rapids. The stone was remarkably compact and uniform in crystallization. In the early thirties gold deposits were rumored to have been found in what is now Kewaunee County, creating much excitement, it being supposed that this precious metal would be found in that section of the state in considerable amount. Such hopes, however, proved without foundation in fact. As early as 1850 one Joel Smith, brother of P. P. Smith, while at work in the present township of Gibson, discovered specimens of what was believed to be copper
quartz, but owing to his subsequent blindness the vein was not located. At intervals of a few years similar discoveries were made, leading finally to the sinking of a shaft on the farm of Adolph Hudson, which, after fruitless endeavors of several months in duration, was abandoned. Finds were later made on the Robinson farm in the same vicinity, while similar discoveries have been made at times in the town of Manitowoc Rapids. The clay in certain parts of the county, notably near the city of Manitowoc, is of a peculiar variety, which can be manufactured into cream colored brick and this industry has been an important one. On several occasions small veins of natural gas have been struck, notably in Newton in 1865 and later in Manitowoc Rapids, not of sufficient magnitude, however, to be of commercial value. A peculiar black sand in the town of Two Creeks was early made use of in the manufacture of matches and large quantities have continued to be exported. With these exceptions the county has been without developed mineral resources.

The surface of the county is gently undulating, being the highest in the northwest and southwest portions. The highest point in the county is in Township 21, Range 21 in the town of Schleswig, which is 359 feet above the level of the lake. The average levels of various of the towns are as follows:—Cooperstown 210 feet, Gibson 95, Mishicot 60, Maple Grove 200, Kossuth 100, Two Rivers 29, Cato 250, Manitowoc Rapids 120, Manitowoc 50, Franklin 300, Meeme 200, Schleswig 290 and Centerville 60. A portion of Eaton and Cato and a large part of Rockland are swampy, but as a whole there is very little waste land. The county is well drained, thus adding greatly to its fertility. The principal stream is the Manitowoc, after which the county was named, which is forty-five miles in length and drains about four hundred square miles. It rises in Calumet County and after a winding course through Rockland, Eaton, Liberty, Cato, Rapids and Manitowoc, it finally empties into Lake Michigan, its descent being 262 feet in the last fifteen miles of its course. Numerous small tributaries swell its flow, notably the north branch which flows into it in the western part of the town of Rapids, after drain-
ing a goodly portion of the northern part of county, the North Mud Creek, which joins it in the town of Rockland and which flows through Reedsville, and the South Mud Creek. Good water power was afforded at an early day at eight places along the course, notably at Murphy's mills and at Manitowoc Rapids. The stream was then much higher than at present and was navigable for canoes nearly to Lake Winnebago, as Lapham says in his description of Wisconsin, written in 1844. At about this time a canal was proposed to connect it with Lake Winnebago, which would require, it was estimated, thirty-seven locks but the project never received much attention. High water and floods were often causes of great damage, those of 1881, 1885 and 1888 being particularly destructive to property, including many dams and bridges. At the mouth of the river, where it entered the lake, sand bars formed before improvements began and the lands in the vicinity were very low and marshy, necessitating much filling in improving the village of Manitowoc.

The next largest streams of the county are the Twin Rivers, the Neshoto or West Twin and the Mishicott or East Twin, which unite a few rods from the point, where they enter the lake. The East Twin is the shorter and rises in the town of Montpelier in Kewaunee County, flowing southward after being joined by Mauvais Creek, while the West Twin rises in Brown County and flows through Cooperstown, Gibson and Kossuth southeastward into the lake. Good water power was once utilized on both, notably at Mishicott and Neshoto. The Sheboygan River flows southeastward through the town of Schleswig and receives several tributaries from that portion of the county, among them Meeme Creek. Water power was also early utilized on this stream. Besides these principal rivers there are several creeks, emptying into the lake at points along the shore, among them the Little Manitowoc, whose mouth is in the northwestern part of the city of Manitowoc and whose course is largely marked by marshes and bayous, Silver and Calvin Creeks, three and four miles south of the city respectively, Point Creek, seven miles south and Centerville Creek, running through the village of that
name. The southern and western parts of the county are dotted with small lakes. Among the largest are Cedar Lake in the town of Schleswig, English Lake in Newton, named after a surveyor who is said to have fallen in that body of water, Pigeon Lake in Liberty, Silver Lake in Rapids, Long Lake in Rockland and Prairie Lake in Meeme. These, as well as the rivers and creeks, are fed by numerous springs of pure water. In fact the water supply of the county is varying in quantity and high in quality. At Manitowoc the nearness of the lake made it unnecessary to dig artesian wells but the domestic wells used before a water works system was installed were very satisfactory and the veins seemed inexhaustible. At Two Rivers, however, it was necessary in one instance to drill 1700 feet before a flow was obtained and in several portions of the county wells for farm purposes have been drilled to a considerable depth.

When the first settlers came to the county they found it an almost impenetrable wilderness. Pine was the prevailing timber, great forests of it growing along the banks of the Manitowoc and in the northern part of the county. Hemlock was also growing in great quantities, particularly in the northeastern part around Two Rivers, while the tamarack filled the swamps in the western portion. The hard varieties, such as the beech, elm and maple were also of abundant growth and the wild crabapple, willow and sumach fringed the banks of the streams. The hand of the lumberman in twenty years devastated this virgin forest but even up to the present day the county has been fairly well wooded, particularly in the northern and western portions. In the past the thick growth of trees offered in many respects an excellent opportunity for the spread of fire and the fear of this danger was not the least of the anxieties of the pioneer. The most destructive of the great forest fires, which Wisconsin has experienced, that in 1871, touched the northern portions of the county and resulted in great loss of property. In other years also, among them 1864 and 1895, considerable damage was the result of these conflagrations. The native vegetation of the county originally was that usually found in the northern states. Wild
grape vines clung to the trees, berries were hidden under the pine needles, wild rice grew in the marshes and the open places were carpeted with all the various kinds of grasses. The hand of man here too soon made itself felt and as the years rolled by waving fields of grain and rich meadows spread in extent until Manitowoc's present reputation as an agricultural county was established. Hard wheat was the first chief product of the cultivated soil but the softer varieties and oats, barley and rye soon supplanted it, while hay was always an important crop. Vegetables find the proper qualities in the soil to bring forth abundant crops and the result has been that pease, beans, cabbages and potatoes have been raised in great quantities. Manitowoc County pease, in particular, have, as canned products, gained a wide reputation. Fruits too, principally apples, cherries and plums, are raised to a considerable extent.

In the early days wild animals roamed at will through "the forests primeval." Bears subsisted on nuts and berries and were seen in the county as late as the sixties quite frequently. In 1859 a lynx was shot within a half mile of Manitowoc and deer were numerous even at a later period. The wild ducks and geese visited the wild rice fields in the autumn and the rabbit, gopher and squirrel made their permanent habitation in the trunks of old trees and beneath their roots. Snakes were never very plentiful and those of a harmless variety. In the streams fish were abundant, including bass, pickerel and "bullheads", while in the lake whitefish, trout and herring were caught in quantities, Two Rivers being the center of that industry. In the rivers of the northern part of the county, particularly in Kossuth and Gibson, clams are abundant and several valuable pearls have been found. Crawfish are also numerous at the mouths and along the courses of the streams.

In climate Manitowoc County has much, for which to be thankful. The mitigating influences of the lake have prevented extremes of heat and cold and, although the springs are frequently somewhat raw and inclement, the autumns are most pleasantly prolonged and frosts are often postponed un-
til late October. The county has never been visited by a severe cyclone or destructive winds and has in a remarkable degree escaped floods and droughts. On the whole Nature did much in providing so favored a region for a community to work out the results, of which the account is given in the succeeding pages.