TERRITORIAL HISTORY OF WISCONSIN.

The State of Wisconsin is situated between lat. 42 deg. 50 min. and 47 deg. north of equator, and long. 87 deg. 50 min. and 92 deg. 30 min. west of Greenwich, near London, England. For its northern border, Wisconsin has the largest body of fresh water in the world, Lake Superior; Lake Michigan, a body of fresh water, almost equal in size, forms its eastern border, and the Mississippi River, the largest river in the world, but one, flows on its western boundary. The State of Michigan lies on the east, Illinois on the south, and Iowa and Minnesota on the west of Wisconsin. It has an average length of about 300 miles, breadth 215 miles, and an area of 56,000 square miles. Deducting from this the surface occupied by lakes, rivers, etc., there remain 53,924 square miles, or 34,511,560 acres of land.

Though there are no mountains in Wisconsin, there are numerous prominent "mounds," so called, among them the Blue Mounds in Iowa and Dane Counties, 1729 feet above the sea; the Plateau Mounds, 1724 feet, and the Sunflower Mound, 1613 feet, in Great County. There is a prominent ridge or elevation of land along the borders of the tributaries of Lake Superior, which, near the Montreal River, is 1720 or 1890 feet above the sea level, gradually diminishing to about 1180 feet at the west line of the State. The escarpment cliffs along the east shore of Green Bay and Lake Winnebago, extend south through Dodge County, and form in many places bold escarpments; some of the highest points are 1460 feet above the sea. A series of still more prominent "bluffs" extend along the banks of the Mississippi River, forming some of the grandest and most picturesque scenery in the country. With the exceptions above named, nearly the whole surface of the State may be regarded as one vast, slightly undulated plain, having an elevation of from 600 to 1500 feet above the ocean. This great plain is cut in every direction by the courses of rivers and streams, that have made for themselves often deep and narrow valleys in the yielding soil and rocks. The dividing grounds between these valleys (watercourses) usually attain but a slight elevation above the surrounding country, the waters of a lake or marsh being often drained in opposite directions to reach the ocean at widely different points. Canoes often pass from the head of one stream to another without difficulty. At Portage City the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers approach so near that their waters are commingled; they are connected by a short canal, from which there is a descent of 195 feet to Green Bay, and 121 feet to the Mississippi, at Prairie du Chien.

The same Wisconsin, first of our territory, and since of our State, was derived from its principal river, which the Chippewa, residing on its head streams, named "Ouza-ree," which signifies "the gathering of the waters." They gave it this name, as an Indian trader informed the venerable Rev. Dr. Alfred Bancroft, on account of the numerous branches above Platte concentrating into one stream, these branches flowing onward to a great distance with but comparatively few accessions to swell its current, till it loses itself in the mighty Father of Waters—the Mississippi.

The enterprising French missionaries and traders were the first to plant the standard of the cross, and the germs of civilization, in the region west of Lake Michigan, making their advent as early as 1629. In this year, as is believed, Sieur Jean Nicollet, the first Algonquin interpreter for the Canadian government, visited Green Bay. As early as 1649, Father Rene Menard, lottering, as it were, on the verge of the grave, left Canada, and founded the mission at Keweenaw, on the southern shore of Lake Superior, and the following spring met death at the hands of the Huron Indians, whom he sought to convert, on the first rapid of the Manoomin.

There is something grand and sublime in the history of these early missionaries; for nothing daunted, Father Claude Allouez pushed on in 1650, to St. Mary's, and thence to the beautiful bay of Chegognigo; and, in 1669, we find this intrepid missionary abounding La Pointe, on account of the curiosity and ridicule of his boastful parishioners, wending his way to Green Bay, and founding a mission at Depere.

In September of this year he was joined by Father James Marquette—who, in 1673, pioneered his way up the Fox and the Wisconsin, and was the first white man to discover the Upper Mississippi. The mission was continued at Depere with varied success, for several years.

In 1672 a military post was established at Chegognigo Point, now better known as La Pointe; and thence what Post was occupied by white traders, and most of the time as a military post. When Champlain, the historian of New France, visited Wisconsin, in 1612, he found Father Chabanon at the fort at Green Bay, about a mile and a half from the mouth of Fox River.

Space will not permit of anything more than a passing notice of the several French expeditions into the Valley of the Fox River against the Atsiski and Oshkosh Sauk and Foxes, led by Sieur De Lorimont, in 1716, De Lechy, in 1728; Maric, in March, 1730; and Sieur De Villers, in September of the same year.

By these repeated sanguinary forays, the Inmake Sauks and Foxes were severely punished, and the beautiful valley they occupied was brought prominently to the notice of Canadian French adventurers. This led to the first permanent settlement of the country, at Green Bay, about 1745, by Sieur Augustin de la Grèbe, at the head of a small colony. The country remained under the dominion of France, and furnished a band of warriors headed by Charles de la Grèbe, who fought gallantly under the flag of France during the old French war of 1756 to the surrender of Canada in 1760, when Canada and its dependencies were surrendered to Great Britain. The British post at Green Bay, under Lieut. Gen. Darnall, was abandoned during the temporary Indian outbreak of 1763. The laws of Canada governed the territory until its transfer to the United States in 1842; and thenceforward for several years, though formally succeeding a part of the territory northwest of the Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, there was little civil or other authority exercised in the country beyond a show of the administration of justice at Prairie du Chien, and the occasional court of CRABBE TRAKEY, at Green Bay.

During the war of 1812-15, Prairie du Chien was the theatre of several important military operations. In 1816 military posts were established at Green Bay and Prairie du Chien; and, in 1818, when Illinois became a State, and the jurisdiction of the frontier settlements of Wisconsin was transferred to the Territory of Michigan, the counties of Brown and Crawford, comprising the whole territory of what now constitutes Wisconsin, were established and organized. And, in 1823, a further step in the civil government of the country was taken, by the formation of a U. S. judicial district west of Lake Michigan, with the appointment of James D. Burt as Judge.

The early, adventurous explorer, Nicholas Perrot, interpreter and commandant on the Upper Mississippi, in 1805, has the credit of first discovering lead on the River Des Moines, in Iowa, which mines long bore his name; and Le Sueur, in his voyage up the Mississippi, in 1769, describes lead mines, apparently at the points now known as Galena and Delphine. Carver, in 1766, speaks of lead abounding at the River des Mouniens. But these mines attracted little attention until the period of 1820-27. During the years 1830-37, 1838, and 1839 large numbers of miners and adventurers came to the country; and the brief Black Hawk War of 1832 brought many of the Illinois soldiers to Wisconsin, who, charmed with the appearance of the country, subsequently returned and became permanent settlers.

In 1835, Michigan, having assumed a State government, John S. Huling, Secretary and Acting Governor, conceived a scheme of the Legislators at Green Bay, from the remainder of said Territory west of Lake Michigan. No business, however, was transacted, except the passage of several memorials to Congress, among which was one asking for the organization of the Territory of Wisconsin, with the seat of government at Madison, where the first session of the second Legislative Assembly of Wisconsin met in 1828. On the 12th of June preceding, the Territory had been divided by act of Congress, and that part west of the Mississippi established as a separate government, under the name of Iowa.

A Convention assembled at Madison, October 5, 1845, for the purpose of drafting a State Constitution, which was completed December 14, 1845, but rejected by the people at the election held on the first Monday in April, 1847. A second Convention assembled December 16, 1847, and agreed to a constitution on the first of February following, which was approved by the people at the election held in April, 1848, and Wisconsin was admitted into the Union, on an equal footing with the other States, on the 29th day of May, 1848; and since has acted as a part of the American Republic.

The following table shows the population of the several counties of the Territory, as disclosed by the census taken in the several years specified.