

EMPIRE

LOCATION.—The town of Empire, organized separately from Taycheedah in 1851, embraces thirty sections of land in township 15, range 18 east of the fourth principal meridian in Fond du Lac County. The northern tier, sections 1 to 6 of the township, is still included in the town of Taycheedah, of which the entire township once formed a part. No part of Empire is at a greater distance than ten miles from Fond du Lac city, and those farmers living in the northwestern and western portions have a haul of from two to five miles only. Empire is bounded north by Taycheedah, east by Forest, south by Eden, and west by Fond du Lac. The nearest lake harbor is Sheboygan, about thirty miles, reached from 1852 by means of a plank road.

SURFACE AND DRAINAGE.—The town of Empire shows considerable diversity in surface features. The outstanding geographical feature is the ridge or "ledge" of Niagara limestone. This ledge, after paralleling the curves of the shore of



FIG. 10. TOPOGRAPHIC MAP, TOWN OF EMPIRE

Reproduced from United States Geological Survey Fond du Lac Quadrangle

Lake Winnebago, trends almost due south from the end of the lake through the state, forming the western escarpment of the Niagara outcrop. In Empire it occupies a considerable fraction of the two western ranges of sections, though the flat lands of the Fond du Lac lake-bed plain constitute the actual western fringe in sections 7, 18, 19, 30, and 31. A glacial marsh occupies portions of the two easternmost ranges of sections, and there are slight depressions elsewhere. The topographic chart of the Fond du Lac Quadrangle, which includes the northern half of the town, shows lowlands and uplands intermingled though the difference in elevation of the two types of land is slight. The roads, wherever possible, follow the uplands. Taycheedah Creek has its sources in Empire and flows northwest, breaking through the ledge in its course toward Winnebago Lake, while branches of Sheboy-

gan River, heading near Taycheedah Creek, flow in the opposite direction. The ledge abounds in fine springs, and many springs occur elsewhere in the town. Lake de Neveu, one of the sources of de Neveu Creek, lies in sections 30 and 31.

TYPES OF SOIL.—Three main types of soil, closely related to surface features, prevail in the town. First, the well drained or fairly well drained undulating to hilly lands represent the Miami silt type of soil, of which there is a large and almost continuous body lying just east of the ridge, and smaller discontinuous patches intermingled with Miami gravelly loam and with beds of peat in other portions. Second, the Miami gravelly loam, corresponding to the rougher, higher lands, covers the moraine belt in the western portion of the town together with many areas, some of them occupying the equivalent of half a section, which are distributed unevenly through the remainder of the town. The areas of peat represent the marshes. They are frequently bordered by narrow strips of Clyde clay loam. The Poygan clay and Superior clay loam are soils characteristic of the level lacustrine lands which cover the town of Fond du Lac and extend to the limestone ridge in Empire.¹ Both are strong, productive soils requiring careful cultivation to prevent "baking." Of the others, the Miami silt is the favored variety of soil, with Miami gravelly loam a second choice and peat a very undesirable type.

TIMBER.—The local historians speak of the southeastern portion of Empire as heavily timbered.² This statement is not warranted by the notes of the United States surveyor N. W. King, who ran the section lines in this township in 1835. He describes most portions as lightly timbered, thinly timbered, etc. Some lines ran through oak openings, and there was also some prairie, both wet and dry. On the whole, we must regard Empire as a territory easy to clear, not a wooded town like Eagle, or like Franklin.

BEGINNINGS OF SETTLEMENT.—In Empire the first land purchases do not represent the first homes. The earliest recorded entries were made in 1836. These were in sections 18 and 17, and took the entire south half of those two sections, together with the west half of the northwest quarter of 17. Other entries in 1837 took the remainder of these sections (except the east half of the northeast quarter of 17) and also the whole of 7, the north half of 19, and half of the southwest quarter of 31. No other lands were taken prior to 1841, few pieces before 1843, and the bulk of the sections sold in

1848 and 1849. A study of the early entries in relation to the topographic chart shows that they were taken for the purpose of controlling possible mill sites on Taycheedah Creek and de Neveu Creek. James D. Doty was one of the most generous purchasers—a fact which, in itself, establishes the speculative character of these entries. The three mill sites ultimately developed in the town were all included among the entries of 1836 and 1837.

The record of land entries indicates that in the history of its settlement the town of Empire represents fairly well the history of settlement in the county. Census returns for Fond du Lac County, up to 1850, were as follows: in 1836, 2; in 1840, 139; in 1842, 295; in 1846, 3544; in 1847, 7459; in 1850, 14,510. Rapid progress in settlement appears to have begun about 1846.³ That was the time when the Fond du Lac region began actively to develop its transportation facilities. In December, 1846, a Fox River improvement convention was held at Fond du Lac to promote the opening of the routes by Green Bay and by the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers.⁴ Immediately an alternative plan was suggested, that of a railroad to Sheboygan, and the legislature in February following passed a bill authorizing the organization of the Sheboygan and Fond du Lac Railroad (which, however, was not completed till 1869). About the same time was begun the movement to build a plank road from Sheboygan to Fond du Lac, a work which was completed in 1852.⁵ It accommodated the farmers of Empire even before its completion, and the project itself, as soon as it was broached, contributed to the activity in land purchasing. The port of Sheboygan was only thirty miles from the east line of Empire, and, with a good road in prospect, the lightly timbered lands of that town were far more attractive to settlers than were the heavily wooded lands nearer the lake.

The first permanent settlers were Gustave de Neveu, A. T. Denniston, and the La Bordes in 1839.⁶ The early settlers were largely Americans from the northeastern states, but German, Irish, and English immigrants came in rapidly. The 1850 record is unavailable, being combined with that of Taycheedah, but the census of 1860 shows 519 individual Americans to 290 of foreign birth, and 57 American families to 86 foreign families. A goodly number of the natives were American born children of foreign parents. There were 83 Germans, 51 English, and 105 Irish, as against 259 natives of Wisconsin and 260 of other states, New York having fur-

³ The *Fond du Lac Whig*, Apr. 8, 1847, says: "Within three years has sprung up, as if by magic, our thriving village of 400 inhabitants, where three years ago stood a solitary log house."

⁴ *Fond du Lac Whig*, Dec. 14 and Dec. 24, 1846.

⁵ "Simon Pure" (see *Fond du Lac Whig*, Dec. 31, 1846) advocated the project. For the bill itself, see *Laws of Wisconsin Territory, 1847*, p. 23. For analysis of bill, see B. H. Meyer, "Wisconsin Railroad Legislation," in *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, xiv, 295.

⁶ *History of Fond du Lac County* (1880), 423.

¹ See Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, *Bulletin No. 37*, Soil Series No. 7, *Soil Survey of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin* (Madison, 1914).

² *History of Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1880), 744.

nished 159 of them. Scotland was represented by 26 and Canada by 14.

One of the Fond du Lac County histories (1880) presents sketches of twelve farmers of Empire who came to the town prior to 1860. The list is headed by Gustave de Neveu, son of a French soldier of the American Revolution. De Neveu was not only the first settler in Empire, but the first permanent settler in Fond du Lac County.⁷ He was a well educated man, a lover of books and of art, and was a prominent citizen who at one time was president of the county agricultural society. Of the others, seven were natives of New York, three of England, and one of Ireland. One of the English settlers had been a farm laborer in England. Of John Meiklejohn, who came in 1846, it is said he was "among the first settlers of Empire," and David Lyons, who came in 1844, was "the first" to settle on the ledge. D. P. Giltner, who settled in section 4 in 1848, kept one of the early taverns, at which was held the first railroad meeting in Fond du Lac County, apparently in behalf of the Sheboygan and Fond du Lac Railroad.

CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE PURCHASE OF LAND.—Apart from the mill site speculative purchases already mentioned, there is no positive evidence of speculative intent in the original entries of land, though it goes without saying that some people purchased in the hope of selling again at an advance. No very large quantity of land went to a single person, but some of the original entrymen who became settlers are known to have sold parts of their holdings to other settlers. It seems probable that most of such land speculation as there was, assumed that character.

Differences in quality of the lands were less sharp than in most of the towns. Aside from the ledge there were no hills of serious consequence, and the marshes were so interspersed, in small tracts usually, among the higher lands, that most of the wet areas were taken with the others, doubtless for the hay they promised. In a few cases entry dates show that pieces of wet land were left over for several years. The ledge was taken rather earlier than the rest, due doubtless to its more generally timbered condition, and to its convenient springs.⁸

PROGRESS OF FARM MAKING.—The town of Empire, in 1860, had 119 farms containing 9219 acres of improved land and 7135 acres unimproved, which is an average per farm of 77 improved and 59 unimproved acres. These totals show that nearly all of the land was included in the farms and also that the progress of tillage, since the first settlement, had been fairly rapid. There were several large farms (see plat), one of them having 730 acres improved, one 450, another 320. Several had 200 acres. Ten years later the farms, numbering 151, included 11,872 improved acres and 6594 unimproved, or 78 and 43 acres respectively per farm on the aver-

age. This was changed in 1880 to 86 and 25 acres. At that time the farms numbered 167, improved land 14,434 acres, unimproved 4327 acres. In 1860 the farms contained on the average 136 acres; in 1870, 121; and in 1880, 111. The state census of 1905 assigned to Empire 152 farms, 15 less than in 1880, embracing an aggregate of 19,117 acres, of which 15,724 was improved land, 3393 unimproved.

CLASSIFICATION OF FARMS ACCORDING TO AREA.—In 1860 there was 1 farm with less than 20 acres, 4 with more than 500 acres. From 20 to 49 acres there were 25; from 50 to 99 acres, 32; from 100 to 174 acres, 38; and from 175 to 499, 19. The next census, 1870, showed 3 under 20 acres, 23 from 20 to 49, 51 from 50 to 99, 47 from 100 to 174, 26 from 175 to 500. There was one over 500 acres. That situation remained nearly unchanged in 1880, the second, fourth, and last classes being the same, the first 4 instead of 3, the third 63 instead of 51, and the fifth 29 instead of 26. The increase in number of farms, from 1860 to 1870, was 32. Since the number in class six decreased 3 and the number in class two decreased 2, the total additions to the other four classes were 37. Of that number class one received 2, class three received 19, class four, 9, and class five, 7. Thus the greatest gain was in class three, farms of 50 to 99 acres in area. During the next decade the farms increased in number by 16 and no class lost, so that number must be added to classes one, three, and five, classes two, four, and six remaining unchanged. Class one received 1, class three, 12, and class five, 3. Thus, once more, it was the moderate-sized farm, of 50 to 99 acres, which was becoming the most common type, though the good-sized farm type, 100 to 174 acres, was more than holding its own, while the number of large farms, 175 to 500 acres, was not growing less.

GENERAL PRODUCTIONS.—The wheat crop in 1859 aggregated 36,895 bushels from farms having an aggregate of 9219 acres of improved land. That was a moderately good record, better than any of the lake shore towns showed, but less than the towns in Walworth, Dane, Columbia, Rock, and Iowa counties produced at the same period. In 1869 only four towns out of twenty-three surpassed Empire in aggregate amount of wheat grown, three surpassed her in the average amount per farm, and three in production from given units of improved land. Wheat as a farm crop held its own in Empire during the next decade, as indicated by the production in 1879 of 62,893 bushels from 4309 acres, which gives a yield of 14.3 bushels per acre. With one exception—Bangor—Empire grew more wheat per farm than any other of the twenty-three towns, and Bangor's average farm planting was 40 acres, compared with 25 acres in Empire. The prairie towns which so far surpassed her ten years earlier were far behind, and only the heavily wooded towns near the lake, and the Driftless Area towns, obtained results comparable with those obtained in Empire.

From early times Empire was a large producer of hay, and in 1860, when the farms numbered 119, the count of sheep in that town was 1426 as against 1504 in Brookfield, where the farms numbered 247, and 1711 in Mount Pleasant, which had 252 farms. Only the two Walworth County towns, Whitewater and Sugar Creek, had more sheep per farm than Empire. In cattle, also, Empire stood high, but she was low in swine, the growing of corn not having attained much prominence (only 24 bushels per farm). Ten years later Empire was again third in sheep per farm, Sugar Creek and Whitewater being ahead; and only Whitewater, Mount Pleasant, and Plymouth surpassed her in amount of wool per head of sheep, showing that her sheep were highly improved, with doubtless a high proportion of purebred merinos. In 1880 Empire stood first in number of sheep per farm, having 28. As a town it ranked high in cattle and in butter both in 1870 and in 1880, but low in pork as previously. The 1895 state census credits Empire with 174,865 pounds of cheese and 56,720 pounds of butter, while the 1905 census assigns to her 141,514 gallons of milk, 53,240 pounds of butter, and 200,400 pounds of cheese. There were, at the latter date, five cheese factories in the town whose combined output was 344,939 pounds of cheese. Thus Empire had graduated, agriculturally, into a position of prominence among the dairying towns of the state.

SPECIAL PRODUCTIONS.—No doubt one must regard sheep as the agricultural specialty in Empire from the 1850's into the present century. As late as 1895 the town produced more than 25,000 pounds of wool, and ten years later 15,000 pounds. In 1860 a total of 54 out of 119 farms kept sheep, the largest flock being that of Lyman H. Philipps—384 head—with Lyman Moore second—94 head. Ten years later 103 of the 151 farms kept sheep. In 1880 the proportion was very much smaller, though some good-sized flocks remained. The largest flocks, at all three periods, were in the moraine area, the rough land known as the ledge in the western third of the town. There is no doubt that the character of the land contributed greatly to the success of sheep raising in this town, as it did in Whitewater and elsewhere, and it also caused the farmers to persist in sheep raising after that business had been given up on the richer, more easily cultivable prairie land. Those who were heavily interested in the business in 1860, and who may therefore be regarded as its founders, were all New York men, save two who were from Ireland.

VALUE OF PRODUCTIONS.—The production record for the census of 1870 is remarkable in that Empire's 151 farms averaged \$1003 in value of products. Only 4 incomes were less than \$200, and 17 from \$200 to \$399. On the other hand, 33 were between \$400 and \$599, 47 between \$600 and \$999, and 50 over \$1000. Ten of the last class overran the \$2000 limit. Of these, 5 were above \$3000 and 1 above \$4000. These figures reveal a high relative state of agricultural prosperity

⁷ See account of de Neveu in accompanying sketch of Empire pioneers.

⁸ *History of Fond du Lac County* (1880), 744, 1013.

in the town, for which wheat and sheep appear to have been mainly responsible, though dairying served to swell some incomes and the slaughtering of fat animals helped in some cases. All of the large incomes were derived from the good-sized and large farms. According to the tenth census the figure for the average production per farm was a trifle lower, \$983, but the difference in the value of money made that a handsome improvement over the income of ten years earlier. There were 7 incomes under \$200, and 17 between that figure and \$399. But 30 were between \$400 and \$599, 50 between \$600 and \$999, and 50 between \$1000 and \$1999. Thirteen incomes exceeded \$2000 and several of these overran the \$3000 limit, but only one was over \$4000. Wool was a less important item than in 1870, but it was still significant, as was wheat. The big incomes, however, were in part due to successful cattle feeding, and dairying was maintaining the average on smaller farms. A glance at the chart will show that only one town, Pleasant Springs, had a higher production average than Empire.

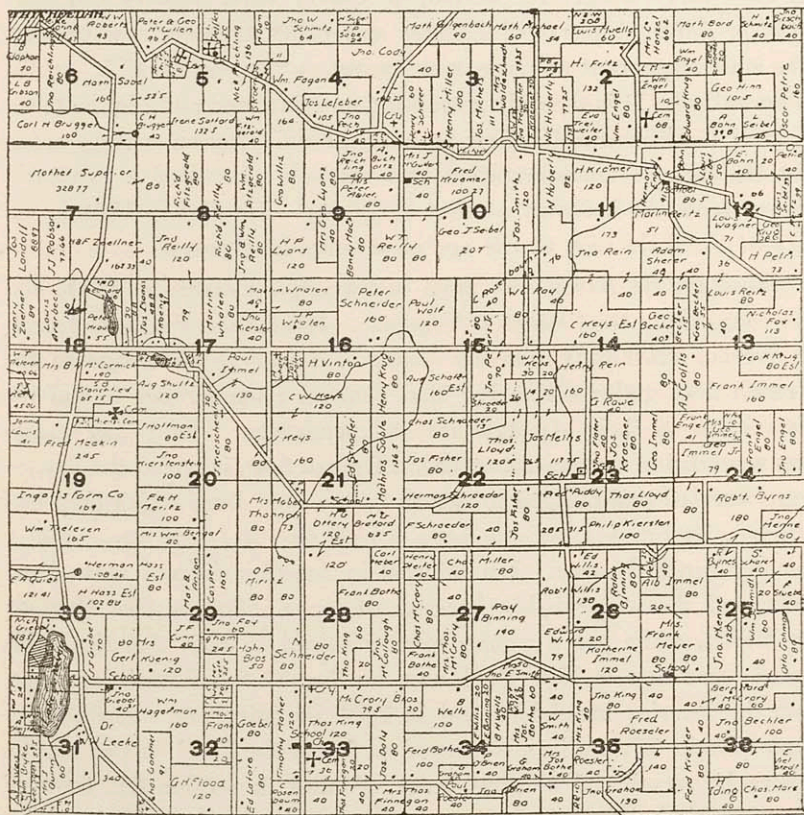


FIG. 11. TOWN OF EMPIRE, 1915
After a drawing lent by the W. W. Hixson Company

The census of 1905 shows an average farm income of \$864 for 1904—a decrease from the high averages of 1869 and 1879. Twelve towns exceeded Empire at this time in total average livestock production per farm. By 1919 average farm incomes had gone up to \$3316, an appreciable increase (in spite of high prices) and a return to its early prosperity. Only two towns had a higher total average livestock production per farm for this period. Six towns had a higher average number of cows per farm, and six had a higher

average crop income. Only two towns had a higher total average farm income—New Glarus and Primrose, the two high cheese production towns.

MANUFACTURES.—The first mill in the town, in section 18, was built by Colonel Henry Conklin in 1841-42.⁹ This became the better known Leonard's Mill. Another mill was in section 31, on de Neveu Creek. Both were in existence in 1874 and remained till the end of the century. Aside from these two flouring mills the most important manufacturing plant was the Empire Woolen Mill on section 17, which furnished a home market for wool, and together with the geographic features of the town doubtless had a large influence in sustaining the average of wool production after the decline in prices following 1870. For some years it was the only institution of its kind in the county, and hence served a large constituency. The woolen mill, like the gristmills, was run by water power. The 1860 census lists one miller, that of 1870 lists four, three of them at least belonging to Leonard's Mill in section 18. There were also a "millwright" and a "mill operative." No detailed description of manufactories in Empire is given.

VILLAGES, POST OFFICES, SCHOOLS, AND CHURCHES.—Empire has had no villages. At an early day (1847¹⁰) a post office called Alcove was kept at the house of J. Y. Westervelt, who was postmaster. This was probably in the southwestern part of the town. In 1893 the only post office, called Eggersville, was in section 11, where was also a store. Tradition says the first school in the town was held in Charles Ribbles's log house in 1845, and that the second school, 1846, was at the same place—W. S. Cogshall, of New York, a former college instructor, being the teacher.¹¹ After some years schoolhouses were erected in sections 10, 11, 18, 21, 31, and 33, where schools continued to be held for many years.

There was a Methodist church in section 33, also a cemetery, and in addition there was the large Rienzi Cemetery in sections 18 and 19. Early settlers often attended church at Taychedah, in the days when that village was prominent, and later many went to Fond du Lac.

POPULATION CHANGES.—It is said the town of Empire was so named because most of the settlers who were there at the time of its separate organization, 1851, were from the Empire State, New York. In 1860, as we have seen, 159 of the 260 natives of other American states than Wisconsin were New Yorkers, and men of that nativity continued to dominate throughout that generation. Most of them had arrived in the late 1840's either as young married men or as bachelors; they settled down, improved their farms, some of which were large and valuable, and became men of substance and of social importance, which influence persists down to the present

⁹ "The many beautiful springs at that time were the greatest inducements for a settler to drive his stakes." Isaac Adriance, "Eden Reminiscences," in *Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter*, Apr. 3, 1886.

¹⁰ "Empire Reminiscences," in *Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter*, Feb. 6, 1886.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

time. In a number of cases, the original settlers brought with them money enough to buy ample tracts of land and to begin improving them. In other cases they were poor and had to earn their first farms by the hardest kind of labor. One way was to begin a farm in the timber, near the lake, sell it perhaps to German immigrants, and with the proceeds buy open land in Empire.¹²

Among the New Yorkers in the town of Empire, the most distinguished was Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, former United States senator from New York, who came to Wisconsin as territorial governor in 1844, and who bought 480 acres of land in section 19, where he made his home and where, in 1864, he died. The Rienzi Cemetery, once a part of his estate, was given by him as a public cemetery and there he lies buried.¹³

Many immigrants of foreign birth bought farms in Empire at various times. Yet the number of these who were recent arrivals in the United States is comparatively small, and the children of such immigrants are hardly to be distinguished from the children of the New Yorkers. Empire has always been American rather than foreign in its social character, a condition which is reflected also in its politics.

EMPIRE—POPULATION STATISTICS

YEAR	TOTAL	AMERICAN			FOREIGN					FAMILIES			
		Wisconsin	Other States	Total	Canada	England	Germany	Ireland	Other Lands	Total	American	Foreign	Total
1850	786	96	427	523	49	36	74	70	34	263	87	56	143
1860	809	259	260	519	14	51	83	105	37	290	57	86	143
1870	1,055	494	193	687	16	41	194	89	28	368	52	136	188
1885	1,019	.....	.....	719	11	39	170	73	7	300	44	142	189
1895	980	.....	.....	766	.....	27	139	36	12	214	71	110	181
1905	870	689	52	741	.....	21	82	17	9	129	102	58	160
1920	770	693	19	712	.....	5	34	8	11	58	133	26	159

SOCIAL HISTORY OF EMPIRE¹

W. A. TITUS

Of all the towns of Fond du Lac County, Empire is the most completely rural. It is, and has been since its separate organization in 1851, a hundred per cent farming community. It has never contained a village nor even a hamlet. It follows, therefore, that the men of whom we write were products of the pioneer farms of half a century and more ago. The families that settled in Empire prior to the Civil War were hardy, industrious, and above the average in culture and intelligence. This abbreviated township (it contains only thirty sections) has claimed as resident farmers two of the three territorial governors of Wisconsin, one United States senator, four Congressmen, three state senators—including the writer,—a number

¹² *Ibid.*, Mar. 20, 1886. "Eden Reminiscences." Case of Henry J. Carter.

¹³ W. A. Titus, "Historic Spots in Wisconsin," in *Wis. Mag. of Hist.*, iii, 331 (March, 1920).

¹ Reprinted from *Wis. Mag. of Hist.*, Mar., 1923.

of members of the Wisconsin assembly, four sheriffs and four district attorneys of Fond du Lac County. To this list of men who have become more or less conspicuous in the political field should be added a number of equally prominent farmers, lawyers, physicians, and business men.

The topography of the town was such as gave to men and boys a broad vision, an outlook over the extensive prairies to the westward that seemed world-wide to the restricted view of the early dwellers in the wilderness. From the farms upon the bold escarpment commonly known as "the ledge," Lake Winnebago and the Fond du Lac region lay almost at one's feet, and to the farmer boys the county seat, small though it was, seemed the gateway to a larger life; the infrequent visits to the city were long remembered events. With their inheritance of health and ambition, it is not remarkable that so many of the early settlers achieved a marked success. It is not possible within the limits of this sketch to deal with the careers of all, or even of a majority of the citizens, past and present, of whom Empire is justly proud; but special mention is made of the most prominent, or of those best known to the writer.

Nathaniel P. Tallmadge was probably the most widely known in public life of all the Empire farmers. Before coming to Wisconsin he had served for fourteen years as United States senator from New York. It is said that when William Henry Harrison was nominated for president, the nomination for vice-president was offered to Senator Tallmadge, then at the height of his political power. He declined the doubtful honor, as so many public men have done since, and John Tyler received the nomination. By this narrow margin he failed to become one of the presidents of the United States. He became interested in lands in Wisconsin Territory, resigned from the United States Senate, and was appointed by the president territorial governor. He located in the town of Empire, which was his place of residence thereafter. He died in 1864 at his beautiful farm home "under the ledge," and sleeps on the topmost knoll of the original Rienzi Cemetery, which he had previously donated from his extensive farm. The old Tallmadge farm, now owned and occupied by Fred M. Ingalls, is located in section 19; it consists of land both above and below the ledge.

James Duane Doty was one of the outstanding figures in Wisconsin Territory. As judge, territorial governor, and Congressman in Wisconsin, and later governor of Utah Territory, he occupied the center of the stage in Wisconsin politics for many years. He early noted the desirability of Empire lands, and became in the early forties a resident of the town. The farm on which he lived is probably the most historic in Empire. Since its purchase from the government, it has been owned and occupied by Colonel Henry Conklin, Governor J. D. Doty, Lyman H. Phillips, State Senator Edward Colman, and Congressman Owen A. Wells. The sheep industry, in which Empire long led, and the dairy industry, which has grown steadily to the present time, were both inaugurated on a large scale on this farm. The property is now owned by the Sisters of St. Agnes, and on it is located the creditable educational institution known as St. Mary's Springs Academy.

John B. Macy, an Empire farmer who became a member of Congress, was a native of New York, where he was born in 1799. He settled in Empire in 1850, and was in 1852 elected to Congress. His farm in section 30 was a model country estate, on which he lavished

money for buildings, stone arch bridges, and landscape gardens. It was the best equipped farm in the town, and the buildings he erected still stand after a lapse of seventy years. The farm later became the property of Honorable David Giddings, who resided on it for many years. It is now owned and occupied by Elwood A. Quick. Mr. Macy was very active in interesting New York capital in Wisconsin railroad enterprises; it is said that the present Chicago and North-western Railway system was begun largely as a result of his efforts. He was drowned in 1856, when he jumped from the burning steamer *Niagara* about a mile off Port Washington.

Owen A. Wells, member of Congress from 1893 to 1895, was born in New York and came to Empire when a child. His father, James Wells, was one of the pioneers of Fond du Lac County, having settled in 1850 on the farm in section 34 which is still occupied by a son, Bernard Wells. James Wells was a remarkable man, both intellectually and physically. At a time when educational opportunities were meagre, he personally supervised the education of a large family, nearly all of whom became teachers or entered the professions. Owen A. Wells, now retired from law practice, is a highly respected resident of Fond du Lac.

M. K. Reilly, the fourth resident of Empire to become a member of Congress, is a native of the town where his father settled at an early date. Mr. Reilly was graduated from the Oshkosh Normal School in 1889, University of Wisconsin in 1894, and University Law School in 1895. He was district attorney of Fond du Lac County for one term, and was elected to Congress in 1912 and re-elected in 1914. He is now engaged in the practice of law at Fond du Lac.

Among the members of the Wisconsin assembly who were one-time residents of Empire may be mentioned Charles Doty, son of Governor Doty, who was elected in 1848 and served in the first session of the legislature after Wisconsin became a state. Isaac S. Tallmadge, a son of Governor Tallmadge, served in the Wisconsin assembly during 1853-54; he resided at the time on Cold Spring Farm, later owned by Frederick Phelps. He was succeeded by M. J. Thomas, a son-in-law of John B. Macy, who served in the assembly from 1854 to 1857, when he was appointed United States marshal. Thomas resided in Empire up to the time of his death, which occurred in 1859 in the railroad wreck at Johnson's Creek, on the occasion of the formal opening of the railroad line between Fond du Lac and Janesville. James Lafferty, a prominent Empire farmer, was a member of the assembly in 1874, and John Meiklejohn in 1882. Empire farmers who have recently been sent to the legislature are Herman Schroeder and Math. Koenigs, the last named being the present representative from the first assembly district of Fond du Lac County.

Colonel Edward Colman, Neil C. Bell, Peter Brucker, and C. W. Keys, all Empire farmers, have served the county in the capacity of sheriff. Isaac S. Tallmadge, John McCrory, H. E. Swett, and M. K. Reilly, all Empire residents, have held the office of district attorney. David Giddings, who resided in Empire for many years, was for two terms, before taking up his residence in the town, a member of the territorial legislature, as well as delegate in 1846 to the first constitutional convention.

Colonel Edward Colman, an officer of the Civil War, was at one time the owner of the old Governor Doty farm in section 7, town of

Empire. He was in 1866-67 superintendent of public property at Madison, was elected sheriff of Fond du Lac County in 1878, and state senator in 1882.

Colonel E. L. Phillips, a native of New York, in 1852 settled in section 7 in Empire. While yet a resident of New York, he was elected sheriff of Onondaga County, a member of the New York legislature, and held a commission as colonel in the New York militia. He was elected to the Wisconsin state senate in 1860; in 1863-64 he was provost marshal of the Fond du Lac district. The quaint and elaborate farmhouse that he built is still standing.

Colonel Henry Conklin, also a native of New York, came to Empire in 1841 and settled on section 7 near the "big spring" just under the ledge. Before coming to Wisconsin, he had been engaged in the Hudson River shipping trade in the same field with Cornelius Vanderbilt, who was his contemporary, neighbor, and friend. During this period he represented his district in the New York legislature for several terms. Financial reverses came to him in 1839-40, and he lost a considerable part of his ample fortune. In 1841 he gathered together the remaining portion of his property and came to Wisconsin, which was thereafter his home. His enterprises here were all on a large scale. He developed several water powers and built mills in different parts of Empire and other towns of the county. The most important of these, now known as "Leonard's Mill," is still in operation. It is the only remaining mill dam and pond in the town. Colonel Conklin was the first to attempt dairying on a large scale, but the lack of transportation and markets prevented a profitable return from the industry at that early day. He died in 1868 in the city of Fond du Lac, at the age of seventy-four years.

Gustave de Neveu was born in Savigny, France, in 1811, and was educated in the College of Vendome. His father, François Joseph de Neveu, when only nineteen years of age, was an ensign in the French fleet under d'Estaing that started from France to aid the Americans in their struggle for independence. The young ensign was wounded in an encounter with a British fleet, in which the French were worsted and obliged to return to the port from which they had started. Before his wounds were healed the fleet had again sailed, leaving him in France. His interest in America did not cease, however, and it was probably because of home influence that Gustave de Neveu, while yet a young man, resolved to visit America. He spent some time in New York as a teacher of the French language, but the interior lured him and in 1837 he joined an expedition to Green Bay. Thence he adventured as far as the Fond du Lac region, where he purchased a large tract of land in section 31, town of Empire, his holdings including the beautiful lake that still bears his name. He was the first settler in Empire and built in 1838 the first house in that town. At that time there were only four other houses in all Fond du Lac County.

On the occasion of Mr. de Neveu's first trip from Green Bay to Fond du Lac, he traveled with Captain Frederick Marryatt, the well known English novelist, and a warm friendship sprang up between them. Mr. de Neveu was a young man of education, culture, and refinement, and it is easy to understand how a person of his type would appeal to Captain Marryatt, especially in a western wilderness where dusky savages or white adventurers were the usual companions. Marryatt urged young de Neveu to accompany him on his journey west of the Mississippi River, but the latter decided that Empire

ended the long trail so far as he was concerned.² Since 1838, the de Neveu home has been noted for its hospitality and social activities. A daughter, Emily de Neveu, still resides on the old farm, which has become a popular summer resort. Throughout his Wisconsin career Gustave de Neveu was a farmer, with occasional excursions into the fields of literature and politics. In 1881, although then seventy years of age, he planned a long trip through the then unsettled regions of the Pacific Northwest. Death overtook him near the close of the year, and his remains lie buried on the banks of the Columbia River within the state of Washington.³

Other early settlers in Empire were David Lyons, George Keys, John Keys, James Wells, M. Reilly, J. McCrory, B. F. Swett, T. Brownsell, B. Kaye, John Meiklejohn, George Meiklejohn, A. T. Germond, John Berry, J. Immel, D. H. Vinton, Hamilton Meekin, John Treleven, J. Isaac, L. H. Jennings, B. White, T. J. Burhyte, J. Menne, C. S. Pray, George Wright, George Shoemaker, the Freund brothers, George Titus, Daniel Graham, and William Edwards. A number of Scottish families early came to Empire, among whom may be mentioned Duncan McGregor, Alexander McGregor, Peter Fergu-

² For Marryatt's account of his meeting with de Neveu, see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xiv, 142.—ERROR.

³ See article by de Neveu in *Wis. Hist. Soc. Proceedings*, 1910, 153-164, accompanied by his portrait.—ERROR.

son, William Moffatt, and J. Campbell. Before the Civil War period, the people of Empire were from "York State," or else from England, Ireland, or Scotland. The Germans in most instances came in at a later date. One of the early German settlers was J. Immel. A son, John W. Immel, resides in Fond du Lac; as president of the Immel Construction Company, the Vulcan Iron Works, and the Clark Motor Company, he is well known throughout Wisconsin.

Although the population of Empire has never been large, it has been a place of sepulture for hosts who have crossed the "great divide." No other town in the county approaches it in the number of interments. Rienzi Cemetery, four miles from Fond du Lac, is unequaled in Fond du Lac County for size and beauty; it is located in sections 18 and 19. Empire Cemetery, in section 33, has long been a burial place for the residents of portions of Empire, Eden, Osceola, and Forest.⁴

Of social or quasi social events, the most common were the farm "bees," country dances, singing schools, and church donation parties. The "bees" were the culmination of a sincere desire on the part of the pioneer farmers to help one another, and especially to give assistance to a neighbor who had been ill or otherwise unfortu-

⁴ For a description of Empire Cemetery, see article by the writer, "Two Graves in a Rural Wisconsin Cemetery," in *Wis. Mag. of Hist.*, iv, 426-430 (June, 1921).

nate. Where no such incentive existed, it was common enough to find a neighborhood group alternating the "bees" for the sake of sociability or the advantages of joint effort. Ordinarily there was a little liquor provided; it was not used to excess as a rule, but the workers were kept in a happy mood. Many of the stone-wall fences that still exist were the result of this community teamwork.

The country dances were simple, unconventional, and without any set time for closing, except that the young people must get home in time to feed the stock in the morning, and do the other morning chores. The people came from miles around to these dancing parties, using heavy draft horses and even oxen as a means of rapid transit.

The church donation party, an annual event, was one of the methods employed for maintaining the rural pastor. The net result was a miscellaneous collection of food and clothing, desirable or otherwise, some cash, and a jolly evening for all, from the grandparents to the children. The few roomy homes in the neighborhood were always in demand for these social affairs.

The pioneers who carved the fertile farms out of the wilderness have passed on, and hardly a thought is given to the efforts of these noble men and women who made possible the comforts and the luxuries of today.