Why Not One City?

In 1846 the five men who were involved in opening this area for settlement were in the prime of their lives. Harrison Reed was 33; Curtis Reed was 31; James Doty was 45; Charles, his son, was 25; and Harvey Jones was 41. Like all human beings of any age they differed widely in personality. Harrison was described as friendly and easy-going, Curtis as peculiar and persistent, James Doty as aggressive and calculating, Charles as agreeable and quiet, Harvey as intense and exacting. They all were considered gentlemen and had a great many things in common except for money. Harvey had lots of it and the Reeds and Dotys had none.

At this time, they were wholly united in a common cause, that of being on the ground floor of a developing, dynamic new land. They believed that big money was to be had in land speculation, and they all wanted to be rich and powerful.

Then what went wrong that their efforts resulted in two rival cities plagued by jealousy and antagonism? Recognized historians have made reference to this unhappy situation but none have figured out what happened. For example:

Publuis V. Lawson - *HISTORY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY* - "There was strong rivalry between the two villages both struggling to gain something over the other".

Richard J. Harney - *HISTORY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY* - "Disagreements soon sprang up between them. Jones and Harrison Reed were unable to work together for their mutual benefit. Jones on one side and the Reeds and Dotys on the other were soon arrayed in perfect hostility".
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Gustav A. Cunningham - HISTORY OF NEENAH - "Misunderstandings arose almost immediately between them which was never amicably settled and did much to retard the growth and prosperity of the place in early days".

Alice E. Smith - JAMES DUANE DOTY - "The strife that characterized the founding of the twin settlements grew steadily more bitter as the two factions competed with each other over the critical issue of the boat canal".

Cunningham also stated: "The exact conditions of the bargain between Jones and Reed are difficult to ascertain". Reuben Gold Thwaites in his HISTORY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY added: "At this late date the writer has found it impossible with such limited means of inquiry as are at his service to ascertain the exact business".

Having gathered pertinent material from books, records, newspapers, personal letters, and the accounts of the court trials, the picture begins to come together. With a reasonable analysis of the material, the sequence of events falls into place.

Looking back through preceding chapters we know that James Doty was a vigorous, courageous wilderness explorer. He was particularly successful in dealing with the Indians, so the government sent him out to negotiate with them when problems arose. In May, 1841, Doty received a letter from Hartley Crawford, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington. It instructed him that the abandoned Indian mission on the lower Fox River must be sold and empowered him to use his judgment in disposing of it.

Doty knew the area well. As a young lawyer he had been judge of the circuit court between Fort Howard and Fort Winnebago. He frequently paddled up and down the river. He fell in love with the island at the end of Lake Winnebago. Having acted as counselor for the Indians who lived there, he often told them how he felt about the place.

Although the Indians had sold their land to the government, they did not hesitate to request that their friend, Doty, be allowed to occupy the island, to cut the timber, and to erect mills on the water as he chose. Even though the government paid no attention to their request, it was called Doty's Island from then on. It was said the Indians gave it to him.
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Doty may have wished to buy the mission property, but he was already overextended financially in land speculation. So, following the order from Crawford, he put an advertisement in the Milwaukee and Madison newspapers asking interested parties to send sealed bids for the land and improvements.

At the time, Harrison Reed was the young editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel. Through his involvement with the Whig party and after successfully promoting Doty's campaign for territorial governor, he had gained a measure of recognition for himself and the newspaper. He needed to go to Buffalo to buy paper stock. He took out a mortgage on the Sentinel in order to make the purchase. While he was away the men who loaned him the money seized the paper for the debt in order to shape its political policy to suit themselves. When Reed returned to Milwaukee, he found that he had been tricked out of his legal rights to the ownership of the paper. He said, "My life mission was ended so far as it had been mapped out at the time of my marriage, and my ruin was complete. I resolved never more to have to do with politics or newspapers".

Looking for a new opportunity, Harrison saw the ad for the sale of the mission. He asked his friend Doty if the property was worth making a bid on. Doty assured him that it was. Knowing that Harrison had no money, Doty first tried to help his friend by interesting his political associate, Nathaniel Tallmadge, in putting up the necessary funds using Harrison as a "front", but this did not work out.

Doty then suggested that three or four hundred dollars would be enough to offer as Harrison's credentials would be easily accepted by federal officials. Finally, Doty sold Harrison the property for $600, but the deal was promptly nullified in Washington and "Doty's knuckles sharply wrapped". In the end, Harrison submitted a bid on October 2, 1843, for $4,760. This was accepted. The terms for the purchase were based on a 3-year period with 10% interest. Harrison expected he would find a way to pay off the debt when it came due.

He persuaded his wife to bring their child and come with him to make a lakeside home in the wilderness. With blockhouses that had been built for the Indians already there, they chose the largest one and moved in. This was a great moment for Harrison. He probably thought of himself as the sole owner of one of the most valuable pieces of land in the territory.

In the meantime, Doty had finished his term as territorial governor. He had not been popular in office. Hardly a session of the district court was held that he was not charged with some offense or other. His appetite for investment had
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exceeded his good judgment, and he had been accused of manipulating government funds. He had gained the reputation as a "wheeler-dealer and the chief of the corrupt men in politics". He moved to his beloved island and built a fine log house. He was broke, bitter, and beaten but not defeated. He would start over again.

It was the spring of 1846 and Harrison Reed realized that the three years of grace would expire in October. He would have to come up with the money to satisfy his debt to the United States Government for the purchase of the mission property. He was exceedingly anxious and even more concerned because he had converted much of the materials and equipment to his own use and he had not paid for them yet.

Harrison mentioned his concern to the Rev. O. P. Clinton who came from Waukesha to conduct services for the settlers. The latter told him that he had an acquaintance who had a wealthy brother in the East who was looking for western land investment.

This sounded like a real solution because Harrison felt that "he did not have the knack of making and keeping money. His financial management always seemed to bring his plans to naught". A partnership with someone who could handle the finances would be an asset.

Obviously the report of Rev. Clinton was favorable, because it was not long before Harrison Reed was summoned to Gloversville, New York, to consummate the deal with the wealthy manufacturer, land owner, and merchant, Harvey Jones. Harvey was willing to buy the property sight unseen. It was generally known that in Washington it had been declared that the Fox-Wisconsin waterway was "the most important natural resource of the entire continent".

Harrison was a likeable person and did not have trouble winning the confidence of Harvey who gave him the necessary $5,000 to take to Washington to pay off the debt. This accomplished, he returned to Gloversville with the deed, and he and Harvey worked out the details of a contract for sharing the purchase. Harrison was to have one-quarter of the undivided tract on a 3-year term at 10% interest. He would be able to pay Harvey after selling the land. When they went to register the contract at the Fulton County Courthouse, they were told that these terms were not legal in New York State. If they wanted the contract registered there, it would have to be a 1-year term at 7% interest to conform with the laws of New York.
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With prime lots selling for $10 an acre and lesser ones for $6 and under, it would take more than a year for Harrison to raise the required amount. So between them they agreed that when Harvey came to Neenah, they would change the term to a 3-year contract at 10% and register it in Wisconsin. Harrison Reed was eager to get the deal settled, so he offered Harvey Jones an added attraction. He promised the help and support of his influential friends in the area to get behind the project of turning the abandoned mission into a thriving city. This agreed upon, they went back to the courthouse and registered the contract under New York law. Harvey promised he would be coming out soon to inspect his purchase. It was the end of July, 1846.

Things were looking good in September when Harvey arrived in Neenah with his wife and oldest son, Gilbert. Harrison introduced Harvey to his brother, Curtis Reed, and to James Doty and to Doty’s son, Charles. These were the men that Harrison promised would help Harvey in this great undertaking. They were all eager and full of ideas and visions of what could be done and were ready to go. They agreed on the tremendous potential of the water power in this one river, calculated to be greater than that in then entire state of Massachusetts.

They all knew that the Fox River was a part of the plan for a great water highway that would join the Atlantic Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico by way of the Mississippi River. This would provide an avenue of commerce and transportation unequalled anywhere in the world.

Harvey was tremendously impressed and took charge immediately. He began by deepening and widening the raceway of the mill. He amazed all of them by getting down in the mud and water and working like a common laborer. There is no record that the rest of them joined him, but what Harvey did was noteworthy enough to have been recorded in history.

We know that the five men were still on good terms with each other when, on February 2, 1847, the territorial legislature granted Jones and Company a charter to build a dam across the south channel. On February 11, the Town of Neenah was organized, and James Doty was elected chairman. On February 20, Charles Doty issued Harvey Jones a Quit Claim Deed for the use of the water for hydraulic purposes as it related to the north bank of the river, which land he owned. This was the high point in the relationship of the five men who united to found the new city.

At this time, Harvey Jones announced that he was so impressed with the potential of the place that he was going back to Gloversville to close out his
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business interests there and that he would be coming back to make Neenah his permanent home and his number one project. He also stated that he had decided to plat the undivided tract as the Village of Neenah which he would do when he returned.

Early in the spring of 1847, the Joneses bade the others farewell and started back to New York. As far as we know, they were all friends and were looking forward to the future, working together with enthusiasm for their mutual benefit.

What happened that turned the Reeds and Dotys against Harvey Jones? Harvey was the person who had saved the day by supplying the money to purchase the mission property. Nothing was said as to how Harvey would reward them for their efforts. It is possible that they felt their chance of getting a fair share of the profits from the venture were uncertain. However, there is no record that accounts for the hostility they felt against Harvey Jones. Historians tell us that James Doty's spirit "permeated the place and dissention seemed inevitable when he had a finger in a project!" - "that he was endowed with a 'black magic' that influenced the course of events".

In April, Harrison Reed gave Harvey Jones the power of attorney to sell lots for him which established the fact that Harvey acknowledged Harrison’s claim to a share of the property. However, in May Harrison revoked it and sold six lots on his own. There is no record whether Harvey kept his promise to Harrison to change the contract to the 3-year term of Wisconsin law or that Harrison asked for it. Now left at the 1-year term of New York law, Harrison would have barely five months to pay up his debt to Harvey. This would be an impossibility. They all would be aware of Harrison’s desperate situation.

We know that James Doty was a land speculator. He knew first hand that transportation was critical to land development. Early efforts to chop roads through the forests were hopeless. In a matter of a few weeks the overgrowth left no trace of them. However, it had been decided that if the numerous lakes and rivers could be joined by canals and locks, they could become a water highway.

Doty championed this idea while governor and when the territorial governors met in Chicago they officially voted that it was the responsibility of the federal government to provide transportation routes. The idea floundered for lack of money, but it was still the most practical solution if the means could be found.

Up until now the south channel had been the accepted route by the early explorers, the fur traders, the government's mission project, and as the means of moving supplies and munitions from Fort Howard to Fort Winnebago. Its low
rocky shoreline made portage over the rapids possible while the steep, heavily wooded banks of the north channel were impassable.

However, there was an available river in parallel position on both sides of the island which could be developed into the major waterway. Doty began buying land on the shore of the north channel gambling on the chance that the federal government would find the money and by careful steering he could manage to get the official canal located there. This would make land along the waterway tremendously valuable. It was worth taking the chance and if he won, he would not have to share the advantage with Harvey Jones. By Doty's political maneuvering of the legislature, a choice of north or south channel was held open while the solution of financing was found.

What happened that caused these four men whose work and support had been promised as Harrison's down payment in lieu of actual money in the purchase of the mission property, to pull out of the agreement without notice?

Before Harvey got back, the word was out that the Reeds and Dotys had shifted their interest to the north channel and were planning to build a rival city there. The idea was to make it impossible for Harvey to go ahead with developing the south channel.

Knowing that Harvey intended to plat the mission property as the Village of Neenah, Harrison Reed registered an opposition plat under the same name and recorded it before Harvey Jones returned. This forced Harvey to plat his land as the Village of Winnebago Rapids. This would put a crimp in Harvey's ability to give a clear title to his property.

Curtis Reed became the leader of the rival village which was called Menasha. He canceled Harvey Jones' charter for the dam on the south channel and applied for one for the north channel in his own name. He attempted to lure settlers away from Neenah offering special land deals and outright gifts of property. He had no trouble persuading the Rev. O.P. Clinton to join on his side with a gift of 10 acres on the island.

Summer came and went and the time for Harrison Reed to pay his debt to Harvey Jones was passed. The one-year contract had expired. Harvey was still in Gloversville. He had gone back to prepare to move to Neenah permanently. While he was there he suffered great personal tragedy. In May, after a short illness, his wife died, followed by the death of his 4-year-old daughter.

Few people can follow the story to this point without a touch of sympathy for Harvey. It seems heartless to let him go down in history as irascible, edgy, nit-
Notice of Trespass by Jones against H. Reed,
February 18, 1849.

To all whom it may Concern:

NOTICE is hereby given, that a suit in Chancery is now pending for the recovery of one equal undivided fourth part of the following described tracts of land, to wit: the north half of fractional section 27, containing 242 92-100 acres; fractional section 22 (on the main land) containing 40 34-100 acres; and that part of fractional section 26, containing 22 28-100 acres; in all 303 94-100 acres of land—lying in the town of Neenah, and upon which are situated the Neenah Mills, and the town plat of "Winnebago Rapids;" and that I shall enforce my claim to the extent of the law against all persons occupying the same by virtue of conveyances or contracts from Harvey Jones.

HARRISON REED

Neenah, April 30, 1849.

Notice by Harrison Reed
to Winnebago Rapids land owners, April 30, 1849.
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picking man considering his unfortunate circumstances. Harvey set out for Neenah in the fall of 1848 with a heavy heart and a lonely future ahead.

Once Harvey Jones arrived in Neenah, Harrison Reed took it upon himself to harass Harvey who was his neighbor living in a blockhouse near the Council Tree. He tore down Harvey’s fence and let his cows out into his fields where they destroyed his crops and ate up his corn and potatoes. He broke the young fruit trees and took some of the fence away. He cut timber and took it for his own use. Harvey won a judgement against Harrison for trespassing. Harrison countered by putting a notice in the paper warning anyone who bought land from Harvey Jones that they had better beware as he (Harrison) had a claim on the property as well.

More settlers arrived and it was not long before they had taken sides against each other, the north against the south, lined up in "perfect hostility". On the whole, the newcomers were young and easily excited to retaliate with schemes, pranks, tricks, and outright vandalism. Law suits resulted between Harrison and Harvey which clouded the title to the land on the south channel and depressed the sale of Harvey’s property and the growth of his village. This gives a picture of the troubled feelings between the leaders of the two communities which polarized the settlers.

Left alone, Harvey had to do his own figuring. He plodded along and made progress in getting things done. He hired Marvin Babcock from Waukesha as engineer to build the dam and canal and Harvey built a hotel to house the workmen. He repaired the old mill and prepared to build a new one.

There is little record of his feelings nor details of what he did other than that he was exacting, edgy, and irascible. He was demanding in his requirements in developing the downtown specifying the kind and height of the trees that should line the streets and outlining the type of structures he would permit to be built.

By now the federal government had developed a plan that they estimated would provide money for the state to develop the water highways. By selling alternate sections of land along the rivers, funds could be raised to build the necessary canals and locks. The word was out that the project could begin.

So it was that the Twin Cities faced the greatest conflict of all. The time was at hand for choosing the channel for the government locks and canal. Because both cities had rivers with equal potential, the contest was on as to which one would be chosen.
Why Not One City?

In view of the progress Harvey Jones had made in developing a waterway on the south channel using his own money, it is possible that he assumed there would be no question as to the location. Harvey was financially able to pay for the development of the canal required for larger boats and offered to do so without any assistance from government funds. The fact was that the south channel was already serving a modest amount of traffic.

History records that Jones totally underestimated the scheming and manipulating of the Reeds and Dotys to trick the Committee of Public Works into believing that the south channel was unsuitable for the construction of the improvement which was later proved to be true.

It was arranged to take the committee down the south channel, hitting every rock and snag possible. Then the committee was taken to the best part of the north channel avoiding anything that would jar the boat. After this, Curtis Reed stepped forward and offered to build the canal and locks without cost to the government and to add a $5,000 bonus as well, even though there was no money behind it. With this incentive, the committee officially chose the north channel as the government waterway.

Although "the hopes of many a frontier village soared to dizzying heights only to be dashed when not chosen for the government improvement", in the case of the village on the south channel, the loss of the coveted waterway was intensified by the pall of ill-will and enmity hanging over it.

Before coming here, Harrison and Curtis Reed had become good friends of James Doty. Not only had he charmed them as a man of power and influence but had employed them at the capitol when he was governor of the territory and they were indebted to him. Doty desired to become rich and powerful. He was not beyond using his friends to achieve his purpose.

Usually time has a way of erasing the details of historic events, leaving a mere skeleton of what happened. However, in the case of the feud between the Reeds and Dotys against Harvey Jones, a most remarkable record remains in the love/hate letters Curtis Reed wrote to his fiancee at the height of the conflict. He leaves a graphic picture of his intense feelings and involvement as the leader in the founding of the rival city, Menasha.

Curtis describes how he is caught up in the unpleasantness of the situation and in a youthful way openly admits that he is involved in the fracas in order to obtain glory for himself. The following excerpts from these letters tell their own story.
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There is much unpleasant feeling and I can only have patience to endure it in hopes that it will be of short duration. Everything here goes on prosperously as ever. We have almost daily new arrivals and our place is certainly on the high road to distinction. This accomplished and the measure of the cup of my glory will be full.

Menasha is getting to be the place of places, "all the go" and there is now every prospect that our highest expectations will be fully realized. If so I ask no more glory in this world in this thing. I had much controversy and reproach heaped on my friends for my sake and the feeling in consequence had taken hold on my very life and the end is now near at hand and I am satisfied. I have often almost trembled at the thought of how completely I was bound up in this thing but it is now nearly over and on that point I have relief of body and mind.

Once the choice for the location of the canal was made, he wrote:

By the way my dear, rejoice with me that Menasha has been successful and obtained the location of the Improvement. I had staked my all upon and have won. It is glorious indeed. You never knew half the feeling on that account. I would not make you suffer thereby. I knew you could not help me but I would that you could have heard half of the congratulations I received after I had accomplished that purpose that you might more truly rejoice with me while it is first in my mind.

Curtis seemed totally absorbed and delighted with his successful role in the conflict.

All here seem to be happy and elated with the prospects of our young city and it is fast getting able to go alone but in helping it to do so few can appreciate the exertion of mind...it has cost me. I placed everything on the die and have won but the collision between this place and Neenah was terrible indeed and they have yet the blues awfully and what is worse they are incurable. You will pardon me my dear for seeming to exalt at the calamities of others but I am willing to confess it is indeed so and did you know the thousandth part of the abuse which has been heaped upon me and my friends in that behalf you would think it just. I have succeeded in my undertakings of late beyond my most sanguine expectation and daily receive congratulations on every corner on that account but how futile the idea of the enjoyment from such a success I never did expect it.
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Curtis continued to repeat his need for personal glory as a result of his role in the conflict.

Time passes on most rapidly and cheerfully with us here. The calamities of Neenah seem to come upon them thick and fast. This past week Jones has died, the main man there and they are scattered like sheep without a shepherd. It is truly awfully blue with them and I think they will never get fully over it. Harrison is likely to succeed in his suit for a portion of the property in which Neenah is situated.

It was obvious that the glory he had achieved was found in the eyes of his friends.

The game is now up and the fate of Neenah and Menasha is now fixed. I have but one more year to live to accomplish fully my purpose to make an end of Neenah and to place Menasha ahead of any inland town in Northern Wisconsin and that state of things I have full confidence is now near at hand a purpose you have already learned was near my heart and I must confess it had taken a strong hold of me as I would ever allow any matter of the kind not that I desire mainly to make money out of it. It was not so. It was almost entirely with me a matter of feeling taken hold of at first in behalf of my friends and had I succeeded in building up the place successfully and not made a dollar out of it I should had been fully satisfied.

I was born for luck. All goes well with me. I am bound reap my full of glory. Its course is onward and upward and is perfect death on its rival Neenah and I am satisfied I have sought not neither do I seek for wealth or personal aggrandizement but I have sought and not in vain to vindicate the cause of my friends who have confided to me their dearest intent, feeling that I was better able than they to defend them. This being so was it strange my love I gave it a place near my heart but the thing is over. I have fought and won.

After sifting through the events of this troubled period we are left with the basic elements of the relationship of the five men from which to draw our conclusion. Harvey had succeeded handsomely in land speculation. James Doty was a charismatic leader particularly of the unhappy disgruntled segment of society. He had a record of rabble rousing in the political arena. He had failed in his main objective, that of becoming a rich and powerful land owner in Wisconsin. Doty had a history of using other people and their money to his own benefit. In this he was unscrupulous. His son Charles was an aide to his father but did not
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emerge as an independent individual. Harrison Reed was obligated to James Doty for the opportunities that had come his way through their relationship. He had won the favor of this powerful man through his political involvement in the latter’s successful campaign for the territorial governor. Curtis Reed, the younger brother, openly stated that he wanted his share of the glory. Doty owned the land that Curtis was so vehemently promoting as the rival city. Therefore, Curtis’ primary source of glory would be in the eyes of James Doty.

As a final touch, it was rumored that it was Doty who took the map to Washington to General Bragg of the War Department for his approval. The general was unfamiliar with the location and too busy to come out to inspect it. By turning the map upside down, Doty gave the general the idea that he was viewing the south channel which was the site of the original government canal and so with his signature the north channel was officially approved as the location.

With the north channel officially chosen, Menasha won the coveted improvement. Harvey was deeply disappointed but went on with his work. He traveled to check on his farm in Michigan and then went to Chicago to get the gears for the new mill. Upon his return to Neenah, he was exhausted. He refused to rest and pressed on with the work at the dam and canal and at the mill. He became ill and suddenly died.

So it was that with the death of Harvey Jones, the personal conflict between him and the Reeds and Dotys was ended. Nevertheless, by now the settlers of the two communities were established with an attitude of hostility and a spirit of bitterness toward each other.

This is how it happened that “two cities were built where the geographical plat was ideal for the development of one large industrial center”. “Twin cities were born amidst rivalry, confusion, obstinacy, and foolish pride.” It was at this time that the seeds of enmity were sown that have plagued these communities for almost 150 years. This was the work of five men in the space of three years.

None of them profited in the venture in the grand way they had hoped for. In the founding of the Twin Cities, the Reeds and Dotys and Harvey Jones, intelligent, educated, respectable gentlemen in top hats and waist-coats left a tragic legacy to a beautiful land.

September 8, 1847, Harrison Reed platted the Village of Neenah.

January 6, 1848, Harvey Jones platted the Village of Winnebago Rapids.
May 29, 1849, Charles Doty platted the Village of Menasha with Curtis Reed as Attorney.

Harvey Jones died in Neenah November 8, 1849. He lived in Neenah only two and one-half years.

Harrison Reed died May 25, 1895, in Jacksonville, Florida. He lived in Neenah fifteen years.

Curtis Reed died May 18, 1895, in Menasha where he lived all his life.

James Doty died June 13, 1865, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He lived in Neenah sixteen years.

Charles Doty died in 1918 in St. Andrew, Florida, after living in Menasha for 39 years.

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Arva Adams