CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTY AND CITY OF WAUKESHA

This county was included in Milwaukee County until 1846 when an area four townships square, or sixteen in all, was set off and called Waukesha County; the county seat was placed at Prairieville, whose name was changed to Waukesha. At this time, twelve years after the arrival of the first white settler, the county had about 15,000 people, the majority of whom

had come from the eastern states, especially from New York. An important Potawatomi village existed at the present site of Waukesha when the white man came, and several of the main trails used by the Indians met at this village. Some of the mineral springs of the vicinity were known to the Indians, and their waters were used for medicinal purposes.

A small fur-trading post, kept by a French Canadian named Vieau, existed at the Indian village. Many of the cities and towns of Wisconsin are at places which the Indians had previously selected for their villages, and which were afterwards selected for trading posts. Many of the principal highways and

Fig. 47—View of one of the many glacial moraines in Waukesha County.
even railways of today follow the lines of old trails. Indian and white man alike sought the lines of easiest movement. Indian villages were numerous in southeastern Wisconsin, due, perhaps to the many lakes, streams, and openings in the forest, making a region ideally suited to the sort of life the Indian loved. The red men were supposed to be removed west of the Mississippi by 1836, but some remained and others returned, so that they were more or less numerous after the white settlers came.

**Geographical Reason for Selecting the Site of Waukesha**

The first permanent white settlers of Waukesha were two brothers named Cutler who located their claim of 160 acres at the rapids of the Fox River. They foresaw the opportunity for utilizing the waterpower at this point where the river has a descent of 10 feet in half a mile.

A great majority of the inland villages and cities in Wisconsin, as elsewhere, began with settlements around water-driven grist mills or saw mills. Settlers must have flour, meal, feed, and lumber; and so the trails and pioneer roads commonly led to points where water-power gave rise to little mills; and these points became the logical places for a store, a blacksmith shop, a cabinet shop, a wagon shop, a church, a schoolhouse, and other establishments which make up a village. The water-power at the rapids of the Fox River was one of the best in this part of the state. Its value is shown by the fact that the "mill-quarter" as the Cutler's quarter-section was called, sold in 1837 for over $6,000, a very large sum in those days. At this time Solomon Juneau, the founder of Milwaukee, had a trading post at Prairie Village, as the settlement was called until 1839. In 1840 the place, then called Prairieville, consisted of a few scattered log cabins among the brush. Two saw mills were built in 1838. The first flour mill was built in 1839 and was known as the Saratoga Mills; these Mills had superior facilities for making white flour, and they attracted farmers for 20 to 30 miles around.

**Other Settlements in the County**

Next to Prairieville, Mukwonago, in the southern part of the county, was the leading village. Here also a number of Indian trails met at an important Indian village, and here too was a waterpower which gave rise to a grist mill.
At almost every place where water power could be utilized, a saw mill or grist mill was built, and a settlement grew up. These points included Pewaukee, Delafield, Genesee, Hartland, Muskego, Mukwonago, Oconomowoc, and Eagle. The grist mill at Eagle was the first in the county; it was very primitive indeed; the mill stones had been shaped by the miller himself and were scarcely larger than water pails.

The first saw mill in the county was built at Muskego in 1836. It was a crude, primitive affair with a rickety up-and-down saw; but it was better than none, and settlers came long distances to buy lumber or to have logs cut into lumber.

**The Growth of Waukesha**

The flour mill at Prairieville had become so important in 1841 that 7,000 barrels of flour were exported from the village. The settlers had begun to produce a surplus of a few things, and in this same year 250 barrels of pork and several hundred hides were shipped out.

In 1841 an academy was organized, which in 1846 became Carroll College. Its campus occupies the site of the old Indian Village. In 1849 Blair’s iron works were started, giving the village the advantage of a foundry and small machine shop where iron could be cast, and where iron articles could be made and repaired.

**Development of Transportation Routes**

The period around 1850 was one of great public interest in plank roads. Such public roads as existed were in wretched condition most of the time, and settlers found that one of the greatest drawbacks to profitable farming was the difficulty and cost of hauling their products along the almost impassable dirt roads. Oak forests were common and could supply the lumber for plank roads, and these became rather numerous in the years around 1850. Several were built outward from Milwaukee, the most important and most profitable of which ran from Milwaukee through Waukesha, Pewaukee, and Oconomowoc to Watertown. One ran from Milwaukee to Lisbon in the northern part of the county, and another to Mukwonago and Muskego in the southern part.

The government road—not a plank road—from Milwaukee to Madison passed through Waukesha. More important still, the first railroad in Wisconsin reached Waukesha from Milwaukee
in 1851. This was the greatest event in the early history of the place. The following year, 1852, the village was incorporated, with a population of about 2,000. It had developed a number of industries of local importance, including a saw mill, one of the leading flour mills of the region, two small iron foundries, a factory for building railway cars, a shop where a few threshing machines were made, two small breweries, and a carriage and wagon factory.

Following the building of this first railroad, came an epidemic of ill-considered railroad projects. Farmers were persuaded to mortgage their farms in order to raise money to assist proposed railroads; and villages, towns, and counties pledged their credit as security for railroad bonds. Many of the proposed roads were never built, and those that were built went into bankruptcy. Many farmers lost their farms entirely; others were financially crippled, and a period of gloom and bitter indignation followed. Some of the resentment toward railway corporations which still exists dates from these shameful swindles perpetrated by early railway companies.

Influence of the Location of Waukesha County Upon its Development

Soon after its founding, Milwaukee established itself as the leading commercial and industrial city of the region. The greatest activity in the building of roads and railroads centered in Milwaukee. It was the chief port of entry in the state, had the best harbor, the most capital, and received the most immigrants.

Waukesha County lay immediately west of Milwaukee, and most of the lines of communication with the interior had to pass through Waukesha County; this placed it on the main lines of travel. However, such a condition does not necessarily build up the industries of a place. So great was the drawing power of the port of Milwaukee, that the manufacturing industries of this section of Wisconsin were inevitably drawn there at the expense of nearby towns. So much greater were Milwaukee’s advantages for trade and for manufacturing, that Waukesha and the other places in the region had only limited opportunities for growth.

The immediate suburbs of a large city often acquire important industries, as West Allis, South Milwaukee, and Cudahy have done; but Waukesha is a little too far away to be in-
cluded in this class; it is undoubtedly true that Waukesha has profited by its nearness to Milwaukee and that it will profit increasingly, just as Racine and Kenosha are profiting by their nearness to Chicago and Milwaukee.

GROWTH OF WAUKESHA AFTER 1860

In 1865 Waukesha had but few industries in addition to the shops in which the various hand trades were carried on. There were two flour mills, a saw mill, three steam planing mills, an iron foundry and machine shop, and two small breweries. In 1866 the woolen mill was erected and became an industry of more than local importance.

MINERAL SPRINGS. Though the mineral springs of the vicinity had been known from the days of the Indians, they did not play an important part in the history of Waukesha until 1868, when Colonel Dunbar either discovered, or believed he discovered, unusual medicinal properties in a spring which he afterward named the Bethesda. The publicity which he gave to the curative properties of this spring water attracted widespread interest, and about 1870 Waukesha entered upon its career as a health resort—long referred to as the "Saratoga of the West". Caring for visitors who were in search of health and pleasure became the city's one dominant industry. Hotels and sanitariums were built, and visitors came by the thousands. Other springs were discovered and their curative properties were widely advertised.

Despite the influx of visitors, the permanent population of the village did not gain rapidly; it was only 2,807 in 1875. By 1887, 15 hotels were operating in Waukesha; the largest one—the Fountain Spring Hotel—had accommodations for 800 guests.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY AS A WHOLE

While Waukesha village grew rather slowly, the county as a whole filled rapidly with settlers. The wave of German immigration which came to Wisconsin between 1840 and 1860 poured large numbers of Germans into Waukesha County. The farm lands were nearly all occupied, and by 1860 the county had 26,831 people, which was more than the combined population of Racine and Kenosha counties. It gained only a little over 2,000 during the next 20 years. This was a period (1845-1870) of enormous wheat production, and Waukesha county was one of the leaders (Fig. 91).
Wheat Production in Waukesha County, 1849–1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>312,658 bu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>582,612 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>651,605 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>711,839 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>145,000 bu. (estimate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As early as 1860, the county had 18 flour and feed mills, most of them driven by water. All of these were small, and the quantity of flour and feed which they ground amounted to only $363,000 worth.

All of the manufacturing industries were small, as may be gathered from the fact that in 1860, the 95 manufacturing establishments in the county employed in all only 271 persons and made only $544,000 worth of products. Flour made up two-thirds of the total, yet the 18 flour mills employed only 38 persons, an average of about two to each mill.

Twenty years later (1880) these figures had scarcely doubled, and the 181 manufacturing establishments in Waukesha County employed a total of 472 persons and made a little over a million dollars’ worth of products. Flour and feed constituted half of the total. Agriculture was the dominant industry of the county, and manufacturing received little attention. Outside of Waukesha city none of the towns of the county with one exception have ever built up manufacturing of much more than local importance; the beet sugar factory at Menomonee Falls is the exception.

Waukesha from 1890–1920

In 1885 Waukesha had a population of 4,225, which increased to 7,222 in 1895. In 1887 the only plant of any size in the city was the railroad shops of the Wisconsin Central Railroad, which employed over 200 men. The Blair factory employed a dozen men in making threshing machines; a little brewery employed seven or eight men; the Dodd planing mill employed ten, and the Chase and Allen flour mill employed about seven. The flour mill, still of considerable importance, had a water-power rated at 110 horsepower.

In 1890 there were employed in manufacturing in the entire county about 600 persons, and the output was about the same as it had been twenty years before,—a little below a million dollars. Waukesha’s part of this probably was not far from one half.
1890-1900. Considerable progress was made during this decade, the village becoming a city in 1896. The bottling of mineral waters and the making of carbonated drinks, such as ginger ale, had become a distinctive industry. The following bottling works with the date of their establishment are listed in the report of the Wisconsin Bureau of Labor Statistics for 1897-8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bethesda brewery</td>
<td>1864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethesda Mineral Spring Co.</td>
<td>1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silurian Mineral Spring Co.</td>
<td>1879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henk Mineral Spring and Bottling Co.</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Rock Mineral Spring Co.</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Arcadia Co.</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Water Co.</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almanaris Co.</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Lithia Spring Co.</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Spring Brewing Co.</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Hazel Pure Water Co.</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 48—Map showing the excellent railway facilities possessed by Waukesha.
While the number of springs and their names change somewhat, the following list is typical:

Bethesda Spring
Clysmic Spring
Crescent Spring
Excelsior Spring
Eocene Spring
Glenn Spring
Horeb Spring
Hygiea Spring
Lethean Spring
Minnewoc Spring
Mineral Rock Spring
Silurian Spring
Waukesha Spring
White Rock Spring

By 1900 there were five manufacturing plants of considerable size located in the city:

The Modern Steel Structural Co. (Bridges) .................. 150 employees
Wisconsin Central Railway shops .......................... 150   
Waukesha Malleable Iron Co.................................. 170   
Waukesha Sheet Steel Co...................................... 230   
Waukesha Canning Co........................................ 250   

All of the industries of the city employed somewhat over 1200 persons.

During the decade 1890 to 1900 the county increased its manufacturing 131 per cent, rising to a total value of $2,300,000; the major part of the increase was made in Waukesha. During this decade the manufactured products of Racine County had risen to over 15 million dollars and those of Milwaukee County to 140 million.

1900—1910. In 1905 there were ten establishments in the city engaged in bottling mineral waters and soft drinks. Most of them employed from five to ten persons each, but one (the National Water Co.) employed sixty-six. At this date there were in Waukesha about 15 manufacturing plants which employed more than ten persons each; five of these employed from 100 to 240 persons each. In 1910 the following were the principal manufactures of the city:

A vegetable dehydrating plant ............................. 60 employees
National Water Co. (bottlers) ............................ 70   
A planing and wood working mill ......................... 75   
A brewery .............................................. 80   
Arcadia Mineral Spring Co ................................ 120   
A pea-canning factory .................................. 135   
A lime and stone company ................................ 200   
A bridge company ...................................... 220   

1910—1920. With the decline of the city’s prominence as a summer resort came new interest in manufacturing, and the...
most notable progress of its entire history was made between 1910 and 1920. Ten of the larger industries of the city were established during this decade, and the largest of them (the Waukesha Motor Co.) was established in 1909 (Fig. 49). In 1919 there were in the city seventeen manufacturing concerns of considerable size. Seven of them employed over 100 persons each, while one employed 900, and during the war employed as many as 1400. The total number of employees engaged in manufacturing in the city was between 2000 and 2500 in the autumn of 1919.

Fig. 49—Plant of the Waukesha Motor Company, the largest industry in the city.

The principal establishments were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Motor Co.</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Werra Aluminum Foundry Co.</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Malleable Iron Co.</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kenyon Co. (Reed Chairs)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Bridge and Structural Co.</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring City Foundry Co.</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waukesha Pure Food Co. (Jiffy Jell)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. B. Rowell Co. (Agr. Machinery)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson Malted Food Co.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbur Lumber Co. (Sash and doors)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Furniture Co.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Dehydrating Co.</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bottling and shipping of spring water and soft drinks—mainly ginger ale—is still a large industry. At least ten com-
panies are engaged in this; about 40 car-loads a week are shipped, one company alone shipping half of this. As an outgrowth of its mineral springs, Waukesha has acquired a number of sanitariums and private hospitals, and the largest hotel has been taken over by the U. S. Government to be used as a hospital for disabled soldiers. The population of the city was 12,588 in 1920.

**OCONOMOWOC**

Like most of the early villages, Oconomowoc grew into a local center of trade because of the water power which gave rise to the first saw mill and grist mill (1838–1843). It was a meeting point of Indian trails before the white man came, as it was of roads afterward. It was a swampy and none-too-attractive place at first. In 1845 the village plat was surveyed, and in 1850 Oconomowoc was reached by the Milwaukee and Watertown plank road. This important road—one of the most important in Wisconsin at the time—gave something of a boom to the village.

While Oconomowoc owed its beginning to waterpower, it owes its growth and its charm to the lakes by which it is encircled. One of the most important routes of travel from Milwaukee into the interior led into the lake region of northwestern Waukesha County. Not only was this a region of lakes, but it was also a region of many swamps, and the selection of a route was difficult. An Indian trail passed along the route now followed by the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, through Pewaukee and Oconomowoc, on through the present city of Watertown. The first homeseekers used this trail, and it became one of the early roads; later it was selected for the route of the plank road, and still later of the railroad. Thus the lakes directed the lines of travel in this region and placed Oconomowoc on the chief of these lines. This made it a trade center.

A flour mill was built in 1857 and did a large business for many years. The village was incorporated in 1865. Two years later a factory for the manufacture of plows and cultivators was established; this employed 10 to 15 persons and did an annual business of $25,000. In 1879 a foundry and machine shop was established, but Oconomowoc has never been a manufacturing center. It now has a large condensed milk plant employing approximately 200 persons.
Its activities center largely in caring for summer visitors who come to the lake region in search of rest and pleasure. In 1887 it had a half dozen hotels, two of them of large size. In the vicinity of Oconomowoc, Pewaukee, and other lake-side resorts, are hundreds of cottages and summer homes and the lakes are visited annually by thousands of people, especially from Milwaukee and Chicago (Plate III).

**Incorporated Villages of Waukesha County**

There are 8 incorporated villages in the county: Menomonee Falls, Hartland, Pewaukee, Mukwonago, Dousman, New Butler, North Prairie and Eagle. Menomonee Falls, with a population estimated at 1200 to 1400 in 1920, is the largest. One of the four beet sugar factories operating in Wisconsin is located here. Pewaukee and Hartland are in the beautiful lake district; the former is on Pewaukee Lake and is one of the favorite summer resorts of this region; its resident population is estimated at about 1000, and Hartland's at 800. Mukwonago has a population of about 700. It was one of the earliest settlements made in the county and was an Indian village before the white settlers came. It was a focal point of Indian trails and of early roads and is now on a trolley line running into Milwaukee, and on the Soo Line railway.

Eagle and North Prairie are in the southwestern part of the county on the Prairie du Chien division of the C. M. & St. Paul railroad. Dousman is on the Madison division of the Chicago & North Western railroad in the western part of the county, and New Butler is in the northeastern part. All are villages of a few hundred people.

**Agriculture in Waukesha County**

The county has a land area of 351,360 acres, divided into 3600 separate farms. About two-thirds of the farms include less than 100 acres each, and only ten or eleven exceed 500 acres. A very high proportion (94%) of the land of the county is included in farms, and 70% of the farm land is improved, as compared with less than 60% in the state at large. The value of farm property has advanced greatly during recent years. Taking all of the farm land in the county, good and poor, the value in 1900 was $54.00 an acre. In 1910 it had
risen to $66.00, and in 1920 it is probably not far from $150.00; while choice farms are selling for double that price.

**Surface Conditions.** The entire country is covered with glacial drift of many varieties (Figs. 47, 51). The eastern part of the county was originally forested, but the central and western parts had patches of forest interspersed with oak openings, prairies, and marshes. The Kettle Moraine (Fig. 5) traverses the county and gives it its most hilly portions. This conspicuous moraine is from 1 to 5 miles wide and its highest point—Lapham Peak—reaches an altitude of 1361 feet, which is several hundred feet above the lowlands around it. The Kettle Moraine is easily distinguished at a distance by the almost continuous forest covering of its higher portions.

While the glacial drift is sometimes deep (300 feet or more), there are other areas where the bed rock lies at the surface. Limestone is quarried in many of these places. The northern half of the county is largely covered with ground moraine having a moderately rolling surface. The most hilly portion of the Kettle Moraine is in the southwestern quarter of the county, and the glacial lakes are most numerous in the northwestern quarter around Pewaukee and Oconomowoc.

**The Soil**

The soil of the county is derived from rock waste ground up by the glacier and distributed unevenly over the surface by the melting ice. Much of the glacial drift is derived from limestone,
which gives a better soil than that derived from sandstone. However, much of the carbonate of lime which was originally in the soil has been leached out by the ground water, and now the soil is quite generally in need of lime to offset its present acid condition.*

From the standpoint of general fertility, the land of the county ranks high (Fig. 51). The glacial deposits have seriously interfered with drainage and many marshes and lakes are the result. About 16 per cent of the surface of the county is peat and muck, due to the swamp deposits; about 8 per cent is sand and gravel.

GENERAL FARM CONDITIONS

Waukesha County has become one of the foremost dairying counties of the state, not only in number of dairy cows but also in the proportion of blooded stock (Fig. 52). There are scores of dairies of the finest Jerseys, Guernseys, and Holsteins, the last named being most abundant. A large part of the milk is shipped into Milwaukee for direct consumption. There are 13 cheese factories, 11 creameries and 4 condensaries in the county. Transportation conditions are excellent; every township has at least one line of railroad traversing it, and most townships have two or more lines. The southern townships, however, are not so well served by railroads as are the central and northern. Interurban electric lines, running out from Milwaukee, also serve the county (Fig. 48).

THE CHIEF CROPS

For the first 30 years wheat was the great crop of this part of Wisconsin; its production reached the highest point about 1879 when Waukesha County harvested 712,000 bushels (Fig. 91). In succeeding years wheat growing declined rapidly and nearly disappeared, but it was revived by the high prices during the late war.

During the decade 1850–1860 hop-raising became a very large industry, stimulated by the brewery interests of Milwau-
kee. Later, prices declined, and the raising of hops had prac-
tically ceased by 1880. Then the raising of barley became predominant, and in 1889 some 33,000 acres were sown to barley, and a crop of 1,174,000 bushels was harvested.

* See report of the Soil Survey of Waukesha Co. issued both by the U. S. Dept. of Agr. and the Wis. Geol. and Nat. Hist. Survey.
TABLE XXVI. Barley Production in Waukesha County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1849</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1869</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52,369 bu.</td>
<td>17,187 &quot;</td>
<td>58,034 &quot;</td>
<td>308,977 &quot;</td>
<td>205,018 bu. (est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,174,100 bu.</td>
<td>722,180 &quot;</td>
<td>332,065 &quot;</td>
<td>175,000 &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In recent years oats have become the leading cereal crop, followed by corn. The dairying interests naturally call for a large acreage of meadow and pasture, and hay is one of the most valuable crops grown in the county. Almost every dairy farm has a silo, each requiring several acres of ensilage corn.

![Diagram showing steady increase in the number of dairy cattle in Waukesha County.](image)

In 1919 there were upwards of 1,500 silos already erected. Potato production, while falling much below that in such counties as Waupaca and Waushara, reaches a million bushels in a good year.

![Diagram showing the rise and decline in the number of sheep in Waukesha County.](image)

LIVÉ STOCK RAISING

Waukesha County has become renowned for its pure blood dairy cattle. It is claimed that no other similar area in the United States has so many. Holsteins lead all others. In 1919 there were nearly 5000 pure bred and 10,000 high grade Holstein-Friesians in the county, while there were only 14,000 dairy cattle without a pedigree. Guernseys followed next in
order with about 1,100 pure bloods and nearly 6,000 grades. Jerseys and Ayershires are considerably less numerous. Pure blood Holstein sires have sold for $35,000 in recent years. There are 185 Holstein breeders in the county, one of whom has a herd of 258 cattle. Seventy-five car loads of high grade Holsteins were shipped from the county to various parts of the United States in 1919. *

* Report County Agricultural Agent.