

HISTORY

OF

GREEN COUNTY,

WISCONSIN.

CHAPTER I.

AREA, POSITION AND SURFACE FEATURES.

BEFORE entering upon a consideration of the history of Green county, past and present, it is a matter of importance to understand its area and geographical position; also, its general surface features. We begin with its

AREA.

Green is properly considered one of the average counties of Wisconsin as to size, it having a total area of 578 square miles; or, to be more specific, it contains 370,360.99 acres of land. It lies in a square form, extending twenty-four miles east and west, and the same distance north and south.

Green county contains sixteen congressional townships of land.* These townships are described by the United States surveys as follows:

*Properly speaking, a *township* is an area of about 36 square miles (or sections of land) as surveyed by the United States; while a *town* is an area of any designated extent, forming an organized civil division of a county. This distinction should always be maintained in Wisconsin, and is so carried out in this history; although many are in the habit of

Township 1 north, of range 6 east. Township 2 north, of range 6 east. Township 3 north, of range 6 east. Township 4 north, of range 6 east. Township 1 north, of range 7 east. Township 2 north, of range 7 east. Township 3 north, of range 7 east. Township 4 north, of range 7 east. Township 1 north, of range 8 east. Township 2 north, of range 8 east. Township 3 north, of range 8 east. Township 4 north, of range 8 east. Township 1 north, of range 9 east. Township 2 north, of range 9 east. Township 3 north, of range 9 east. Township 4 north, of range 9 east.

The following are the number of acres of land in each surveyed township in Green county:

calling a *township* a *town*; and sometimes a *town* is spoken of as a *township*.

Why the several townships are numbered as given in the text (and as seen on all maps of Green county) will be fully explained in a subsequent chapter of this history.

SURVEYED TOWNSHIPS.

Township 1 north, of range 6 east	23,460.94
Township 2 north, of range 6 east	23,025.58
Township 3 north, of range 6 east	22,865.60
Township 4 north, of range 6 east	23,169.80
Township 1 north, of range 7 east	23,222.87
Township 2 north, of range 7 east	23,691.50
Township 3 north, of range 7 east	22,870.80
Township 4 north, of range 7 east	22,663.47
Township 1 north, of range 8 east	24,536.92
Township 2 north, of range 8 east	22,945.56
Township 3 north, of range 8 east	22,838.93
Township 4 north, of range 8 east	21,825.81
Township 1 north, of range 9 east	24,989.92
Township 2 north, of range 9 east	22,710.72
Township 3 north, of range 9 east	22,517.14
Township 4 north, of range 9 east	23,025.43

Total number of acres..... 370,360.99

In each full township, as every reader knows, there are thirty-six sections of land. Now, as a section contains 640 acres, the whole number of acres in the county, if each section contained exactly its complement, would be 368,640; but, in the aggregate, they over-run 1,720.99 acres. Ten of the townships of the county, it will be noticed, contain less than the full number of 23,040 acres in each; while six have more than that number in their several areas.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION.

Green county has a position immediately north of the Illinois line, it being in the Southern tier of counties of the State. In this tier are the counties of Kenosha, Walworth, Rock, Green, La Fayette and Grant. Green county is bounded on the north by the county of Dane; on the east by Rock; on the south by the State of Illinois; and on the west by the counties of La Fayette and Iowa. Its eastern boundary line is, in a straight direction, eighty miles west of Lake Michigan; its western boundary line is due east of the Mississippi, at the nearest point, forty miles. Across the State line in Illinois, the counties that bound Green are Stephenson and Winnebago.

SURFACE FEATURES.

The entire county is rolling or undulating, and fully one-half is covered with timber, which, aside from the forests in the south and southwestern part, is mostly openings, that were originally very beautiful and valued as choice farming lands. In the northwestern part, the surface is broken; and this is the roughest por-

tion of the county. In the central, western, northern, eastern and southeastern parts extensive prairies exist. Originally, the southwestern part of the county was covered with heavy forests, abounding in black walnut, oak, maple, basswood and ash of the choicest quality for manufacturing purposes. To some extent, these forests have yielded to the advancing husbandman, but large quantities of valuable timber still remain. Nearly all the timber found in other parts of the county is burr oak and only useful for fuel. Occasionally, however, a square mile or so of heavy timber is found in various parts of the county, which yields valuable wood.

PRINCIPAL STREAMS.

The principal streams of Green county are the Sugar and Pecatonica rivers. Sugar river, in two principal branches, has its rise in Dane county. Its sources are in the towns of Verona, Cross Plains, Springdale, Blue Mounds and Primrose in that county. The two main branches unite on section 28, in the town of Montrose, forming the main stream, which, after a southeasterly course of about three miles, leaves the county on section 35, in the town last mentioned and enters Green county on section 2, in the town of Exeter. After passing through that section and those numbered 11, 14, 23, 24 and 25, it crosses into the town of Brooklyn, at the southwest corner of section 19. Taking a southerly course through sections 30 and 31, in that town, it passes into the town of Albany near the center of the north line of section 6. Its course is now southeasterly to the center of section 16, through those numbered 6, 5, 8 and 9. From the center of section 16, its general trend is southerly, draining sections 21, 28 and 33, and leaving the town at the southwest corner of section 34. Its ingress into the town of Decatur is on section 3, passing through that section and those numbered 10, 15, 14, 23, 26 and 35, into the town of Spring Grove at the corner of section 3, whence it runs across section 2 into section 1; then, after touching 11, passes southeasterly through section 12 and

across the northeast corner of 13, leaving the town and county from that section and flowing into the county of Rock, on section 18, in the town of Avon.

The course of Sugar river through Rock county is southeast, leaving it on section 36, in the town of Avon, when it crosses the State line into Illinois, in the county of Winnebago, discharging itself in that county, into the Pecatonica river. The principal branches of Sugar river in Green county flow into the parent stream from the west. They are the Little Sugar river, Little Jordan creek, Reeder's Branch and Spring creek. These tributaries, with the main stream, and a number of small branches which flow into the river on the east side, carry off the superabundant waters from nearly two-thirds of the county, draining, as they do, the towns of New Glarus, Exeter, Brooklyn, Albany, Mt. Pleasant, Washington, Sylvester, Decatur, Spring Grove and the northeast portion of Jefferson.

There is a ridge which passes east and west through Iowa county about on the line of Dodgeville, the county seat. This divide is known as the military road or ridge. All of that county lying south of this elevation, is drained by affluents of the Pecatonica. These affluents flowing southward from many points, form the main stream in the county of La Fayette. The river traverses the county last mentioned from northwest to southeast, nearly from corner to corner in a winding course through seven towns, until it crosses into the county of Green, on section 6, in the town of Cadiz. The Pecatonica has a serpentine course in this town, passing, respectively, in greater or less distances, through sections 6, 5, 8, 7, 18, 17, 16, 21, 20, 29, 28, 32 and 33, leaving the town and county from the southwest corner of the last mentioned section and crossing into the State of Illinois, in the county of Stephenson, emptying, finally, into Rock river at Rockton, in Winnebago county. In the west, southwest and southern parts of the county, many streams

have their sources all flowing in a west or southwest direction to the Pecatonica. These, with the main stream, furnish the drainage for a little over one-third the entire county. The names of the principal affluents of the Pecatonica, in Green county, are Richland creek, Honey creek and Skinner creek.

THE PECATONICA* COUNTRY.

[By W. R. Smith, 1837.]

A small branch of the Pecatonica runs through a ravine or narrow meadow at Mineral Point, in a southern course, receiving in its way many fine springs, until it unites about five miles below the town with the main branch of the same river, about two miles above the furnace and establishment of Richard McKirn, Esquire, to which he has given the name of New Baltimore. His smelting furnace, saw-mill, workmen's houses, and his mansion, are situate on the western bank of the Pecatonica, which is here a considerable stream; a mile west of New Baltimore, flows another large branch, on which is built Kindle's grist-mill. The natural meadow at New Baltimore, and for several miles above, is unrivaled for fertility of soil, and beauty of scenery, not only in its own features, but in the general character of the hills and bluffs bounding the low land. The broad, deep and clear Pecatonica, winds its way through the wide expanse of low and level prairie or meadow, covered with high grass, and composed of a soil which is complained of by cultivators as being too rich for any small grain, but which is unrivaled for the production of corn, potatoes, pumpkins, and all esculents. This meadow extends from the borders of Diamond Grove near Col. Bequette's, widening in its course southeastward, and bearing the several branches of the Pecatonica on its bosom, as low down as the junction of the eastern branch, near the old Indian town of "Wiota," in the neighborhood of the diggings of Col. William L. Hamilton, formerly of New York, but for some years a Wis-

*The writer of this article gives the name of the river as "Pecatonica or Pee-ke-tol-i-ka."

consin pioneer. From Wiota the river, I am informed, is navigable, and indeed boats have been laden with lead and sent from New Baltimore, and from the Cedar Bluffs, about a mile below, by Mr. Charles Bracken. This is the most extensive range of fine meadow which I have visited; it is about thirty-five miles from Diamond Grove to the forks at Wiota, and a more delightfully beautiful and rich body of land is not to be desired, than the country through which the Pecatonica flows.

In the immediate neighborhood of the Cedar Bluffs, about three miles from New Baltimore, is a small village called the Willow Springs. Here are three or four dwellings and the store of Mr. Dillon; an old smelting furnace is also here, now disused, as it was built on the first plan called "log and ash furnace." This crude manner of smelting lead by the earlier settlers, has given way to the improved cupola and oven furnace, and the blast furnace.

A great public road from Mineral Point to Gratiots' Grove passes by the Willow Springs, and this will always be a main road through this part of the territory, in its principal direction, with perhaps a few changes in parts, where experience will correct early adoptions of convenience.

Leaving the Willow Springs, and passing in a northern direction over a high prairie with oak openings, about three miles, the country becomes highly interesting. Here are to be found many farms in the best and most profitable state of cultivation. Farm-houses and barns and stables, with other out-houses, announce a good settlement, and that the farmer not only knows how to live, but does live well. The kindness and hospitality which I experienced during several days residence and excursions in this delightful section of the country, will be held by me in heartfelt recollection. I need only mention the names of Messrs. Charles and John Bracken, and Major John P. Sheldon, in whose families I found myself at home, to justify my feelings. Not only in their domestic circles, in-

telligent conversation, good collections of books and weekly receipts of news from the far east, did we find (Dr. Smith and myself) intellectual luxuries which were the more grateful because unexpected, but the readiness with which we were accompanied in our excursions through the country by these gentlemen, gave us not only the means and comforts of traveling, but the information, without which, as strangers, we should have been greatly deficient.

On the subject of attentions and hospitalities received by my son and myself during our stay in the country, and in very many excursions through it, I should be wanting not only in correct feelings of recognition of, but also in respect to, the many friends and acquaintances which we formed.

Delicacy alone forbids me to speak publicly of the kindnesses we have at all times and in all places experienced. Prairie du Chien, Parish's, Messer Grove, Helena, Dodge's Grove, Mineral Point, New Baltimore, and other places, live as bright as bright spots on memory. The inhabitants and the inmates of those places named will duly appreciate the motives by which I am actuated when I forbear to say more.

It is worthy of remark that in all places where I have been in Wisconsin—in the comfortable dwelling house in the town, in the snug and neat farm house, in the log cabin—I have always found books and newspapers—of books, many standard and historical works, together with the new novels; of newspapers, those of New York, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia were common, and generally the State papers of the former home of the Wisconsin emigrant. Amongst the literary papers I often found the excellent publications of our friends Godey and Alexander, of Philadelphia; the *Saturday News* is much liked.

From the farm of Charles Bracken the road to Mineral Point passes over a part of the extensive prairie which reaches to the Blue Mounds, and on this road and near it there are numerous valuable lead diggings, particularly

those of Messrs. Bracken. South of Bracken's the main road to Dixon's Ferry, in Illinois, passes several excellent and well improved farms, particularly that of Major Sheldon. A mile or two south of Sheldon's we enter a fine body of woodland, called the Indian Reservations, surveyed for the half-breeds, but not, as it is said, in conformity with the treaty, and consequently the surveys will be *lifted* and re-located.* These tracts are in number, in this neighborhood, forty, of a mile square each, of course here is, in one body, 25,600 acres of the finest timber land and arable soil in the Wisconsin land district. This land will, no doubt, be in market shortly, and the farmer's attention deserves to be turned to this part of the country. Claimants by improvement are already making their locations in these reservations, but the land having been reserved and never offered for sale by the government, I think the existing pre-emption laws will not reach the cases of settlements on them made at this day, and such locations may be of no avail.

Passing through this well timbered country for about seven miles, the union of two branches of the Pecatonica at a point of land high and covered with wood, overlooking the beautiful natural meadow before described, is located the village of Otterbourne. This location is excellent; the advantages of wood, water, public roads, most excellent land and delightful scenery give promise that Otterbourne will in time prosper—at any rate, it deserves to become a town; independent of the localities named, there is an excellent saw-mill and all convenient buildings within a few hundred yards of the newly laid out town. This saw-mill has fine water power and abundance of timber in the neighborhood. Water powers for a grist-mill can be easily obtained here, and as far as my judgment goes, nature has done as much for this mill site as for any I have seen in this district.

*This has since been done by order of the Indian Department (1838).

With such advantages, if a few good mechanics, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, stone masons and laborers would seek their good, they may obtain town lots here at a very low rate, and the village of Otterbourne might thus spring immediately into life.

About seven miles below Otterbourne, on the Pecatonica river, a beautiful and advantageous site has been selected for a town; it has been laid off in lots, and is called "Gratiot." At this point there is a saw-mill and small grist-mill, designated as Sheldon's mills, although the grist-mill was built by the late Col. Henry Gratiot. This location possesses many advantages, there being a large body of good prairie land near it yet unsold, and a considerable tract of timber land is also adjacent. This spot, by a great bend in the Pecatonica river, is rendered the nearest point on that river to Galena, to which place there is already an excellent road the whole distance to within three or four miles of Galena, being on a prairie ridge. The proprietors of the mills contemplate erecting, during the next year, a stone grist-mill in addition to the one now in operation; the water-power for the works is furnished by Wolf creek, which empties into the Pecatonica at this place.

The Pecatonica country is one of the best watered sections I have seen; the various branches traverse delightful prairies and rich bottom lands, over a wide extent of country. Fine water powers are numerous on these branches; and on the union of the east and west branches, a few miles below "Hamilton," at Wiota, the old Indian town of Winnoshek, a chief of the Winnebagoes, a noble river is formed. This stream, after receiving Sugar river, empties into Rock river a few miles below the territorial line, in Winnebago Co., Ill. The improvement of the rapids of Rock river, for which an appropriation of \$100,000 has been lately made by the Illinois Legislature, will go far to render this river perfectly safe for steamboat navigation. The general government

owes this section of country efficient aid, as a matter of *general importance* more than of *local* appropriation.

WATER-POWERS.

A ridge divides Green county from northwest to southeast. The county is, in fact, supplied with a perfect net-work of streams, which reach out, like silver threads, to beautify, gladden, refresh and fertilize it, in all its parts. These creeks are not well supplied with fish, although their waters are pure and clear. They have sufficient fall to afford good water-powers, which have, to a great extent been utilized. These water courses are fed from springs which rise in the high grounds mostly. Over the entire county, on nearly every stream, water-powers of varied importance, exist, of which the early settlers availed themselves by erecting mills for sawing lumber, as early as 1840, in several parts of the county, followed soon after by flouring mills; so that, from the early settlement of the county, its water-powers have been utilized to the extent demanded by its people.

The Soil.—The soil of Green county, generally, is a rich loam, with a clay subsoil, which gives ample security against leaching, and consequent loss of fertility. It is deep and enduring in the prairie, more shallow in the openings, and somewhat sandy in the northeastern part of the county.

The foregoing being a general account of the surface features of the county, we close the description and chapter with the following :

I.

Bird's-Eye Views.—"While there are a considerable number of acres of level lands in the eastern and southern portions of the county, the surface, for the most part, is gently rolling, rising, however, in the northern and western sections of the county, into high and bluff hills. In the southern and eastern sections, the soil is of a rich, black loam, with a large admixture of vegetable mould; however, on the extreme eastern border, a narrow belt of land is found where

the soil is a light, sandy loam. The soil of the timbered lands in the west part is of a deep clay loam, and produces abundantly, when cultivated, all variety of crops. One of the great advantages of Green county, is the extent and distribution of timber—timber and prairie, prairie and timber, everywhere. The largest tracts are in the southern part, where is to be found maple, hickory, walnut, basswood, ash and many varieties of oak. The land being rolling, the whole county is almost without marshes."

II.

"The surface of the county is undulating. Prof. J. D. Whitney, in the State Geological Report for 1862, has called attention to the fact that while the whole northwest is characterized by three divisions of surface—the bottom land, the bluffs that shut it in, and the upland or prairie, the surface of the lead region has certain peculiarities of its own, which are principally due to erosion by its streams. There is, in this section, a rapid alternation of bluffs and valleys. The valleys branch again, and again, in every direction, and their width is usually in proportion to the size of the streams that wander through them. The conformations of surface in southwestern Wisconsin present, therefore, a marked contrast to the comparatively unbroken level of the southeastern part of the State. Green county partakes of the peculiarities of both regions, and may be regarded as the connecting link between them. Near its western boundary the hills are many, and the valleys are narrow; but, in the interior of the county, the valleys along the small streams grow so much wider than those in the lead region that the bottom land of Sugar river is as wide as that of the Mississippi; and the undulations of the surface gradually grow longer and gentler, until, a little before the eastern border of the county is reached, the surface becomes a level prairie."*

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Helen M. Bingham's History of Green County, Wisconsin, (1877), pp. 9, 10.