

SKETCH OF MRS. JOHN GORST

Contributed by the John Bell Chapter, D. A. R.

Prudence Copley was born in Leeds, England, in the year 1831 and attended the schools of her native city until 1844 when she came to Wisconsin with her parents, James and Mary Copley, who had become members of the English Emigration Society.

Robert Gorst of Liverpool was Secretary and Treasurer of the above society, and by lectures, charts, explanations, and so forth, throughout England, secured a membership of one thousand persons who came to Wisconsin between 1840 and 1850 and settled on farms between Lodi and Mineral Point in the Counties of Columbia, Dane and Iowa.

This settlement, known as the English Colony, whose business affairs were controlled by Robert Gorst of Gorstville, which he established in the northwest portion of the township of Black Earth, Dane County, upon his arrival from Liverpool in the year 1845.

Prudence lived with her parents at Gorstville until November, 1852, when she was married to John Gorst, a son of Robert Gorst, the Secretary and Treasurer of the society.

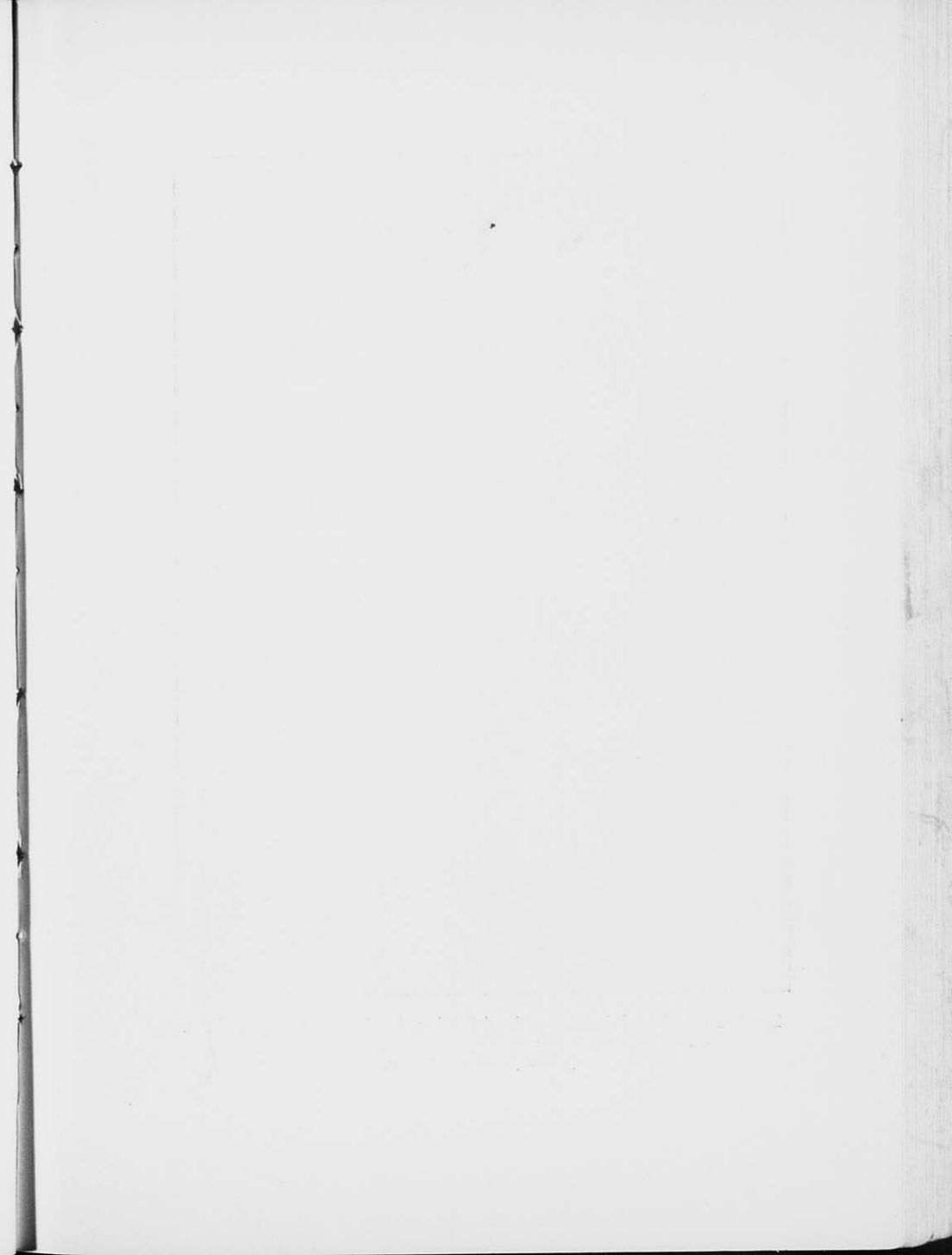
After their marriage they went to their own house on their own farm, located in Gorstville, and there established their home as pioneers where part of the population was composed of bears, wolves and Indians. The country around Gorstville developed rapidly and a Primitive Methodist Church was built a mile away on one side and a Methodist Episcopal Church a mile away on the other side of John Gorst's farm. One held services in the morning and the other in the afternoon. John and Prudence were young, strong and generous; they asked people to dinner on Sunday who wished to attend both churches and soon their home became known as the

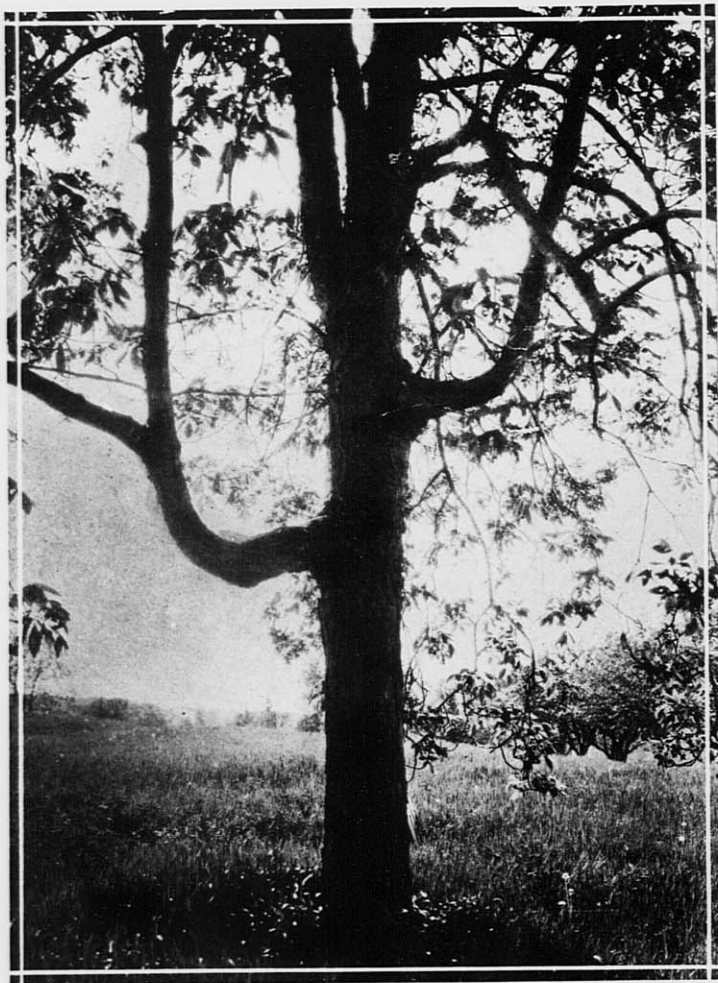
"Halfway House" and they as Uncle John and Aunt Prudence. People learned to know that they would be welcome to a meal or a night's lodging if they could just get to the house. Ministers, peddlers, strangers, friends and neighbors came at will, and for fifty-two years John and Prudence Gorst fed and housed such persons and never charged anyone a cent.

Gradually eight children came to this home to share the joys and sorrows and to increase the burdens of the household. But Mrs. John Gorst was a woman of vigor, health, energy, endurance, patience and ability. She spun her own yarn, knitted socks, stockings and mittens and made the clothing for a family of ten, besides all the work of the home which comes to a wife and mother. Her spinning wheel, sewing machine and knitting were always waiting for any time she could give them. She was efficient at all times in her own household, but she always found time and a way to help a neighbor in need.

Frequently she led singing in the churches and taught in the Sunday School. She was one of the typical wives, mothers and homemakers who carried the burdens of pioneer days and helped to develop and build the great State of Wisconsin.

She did everything she could for her eight children who all lived to be men and women and have families of their own. One son became a prominent Methodist minister and presiding elder of Omaha, Nebraska, another a leading physician in Wisconsin and all reflected credit and honor on the mother who gave so heroically to their upbringing and development of character. She survived her husband ten years and at the ripe age of 83 years she passed to her reward, having lived a life of noble, unselfish, and efficient service.





*Trail Tree found in Mercer's Addition to the City of Madison.
Used to direct the Indian trails by the bending
of the four branches.*