

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ADAMS COUNTY,  
WISCONSIN

by

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## History of Adams County.

Adams County lies partly in the valley of the Fox River and partly in the valley of the Wisconsin. The range of hills dividing the two lies near the center of the county, extending north and south.

When Jean Nicolet, the first white man to visit Wisconsin, came in 1643 he found the Fox River Valley occupied by the Fox Indians, the most powerful of Wisconsin Tribes. Their villages and corn fields were located at various places on both sides of the Fox River as far up the river as Puck-a-way Lake. The upper end of the valley seemed to have been used as a hunting ground. The fields and marshes of the southeastern part of Adams County was one of these outing places. Here they came to trap and hunt. The Fox Indians were always at war with the French and in 1734 they were driven across the Mississippi River into Iowa.

After the extermination of the Foxes their old enemies the Menominee and Winnebago Indians began to occupy the upper Fox River Valley and scatter over what is now Adams County. The Pottawattomies were also found in the northern part of the county.

In 1763 the French ceded New France, which included Wisconsin, to the English. Our county then became English soil. In 1783 England ceded this land to the United States and it has since been under the Stars and Stripes.

The Indians still held possession until the Winnebago uprising in 1828 and the Black Hawk War in 1832, when they were subdued. Settlers then began to flock to Wisconsin. The government bought land from the Indians and people from the Eastern States hurried west to buy this Indian land.

was built in what is now district No. 3 in 1857. This was made of rough logs with a shanty roof, rude benches serving as seats and a table as a teachers desk. School was kept for six months during the year. The teacher received from fifteen to eighteen dollars a month and "boarded around", staying at each place a long or a short time according to the number of children attending school. Women did the spinning, weaving and knitting for the family, and also made the tallow candles. The land was heavily timbered and the farmers often cultivated the poorest land first as this was most easily cleared.

Necedah became the market after a toll bridge was built across the river at Peten-Well Reck.

### NEW CHESTER

New Chester was settled soon after New Haven. The homes were characteristic of early days, but have nearly all been replaced by modern residences. In 1912 a railroad was built through the town and two villages have been the result.

Grand Marsh a village scarcely three years old is situated on the Old Pinery Road and the North-Western Railway. It is built on land formerly owned by H. Rook, S. W. McCheaney and G. W. Fletcher. The first stores were run by Leonard Foster and E. Miller. In the autumn of 1913 the school house was moved into the village.

Brooks is also a railroad station. Within a year after the station was built, what was formerly a grove became the site of a prosperous little village.

### NEW HAVEN

In 1848. A. D. Smith in company with other home seekers, started from Rock County to locate in the Indian Country. They traveled with supply wagons from Madison to Ft. Winnebago near the present site of Portage, and from there up the old Pinery Road to Walsworth's Hotel which was near the present village of Big Spring. Mr. Walsworth was the first settler north of Ft. Winnebago.

The country was then one vast wilderness. With the aid of the other men Mr. Smith constructed a log house on the land which is still owned by his descendents, then returned to Rock County for the winter. This hardy pioneer came north again in the spring, bringing his wife and six children to occupy the log house he had

erected the preceding autumn. Their first year in the wilderness was a lonely one, but they were soon joined by other settlers, - The Staffords, Judds, Moshures, Tanners, Stowells, Landts, Wards, Ramsays, and Winchells.

The Menominee Indians had a large village near Walworths. They had ponies and dogs, used bows and arrows - and guns when they could get them. A little Indian maiden of the old Menominee village married the late Col. John Kershaw, and their son, the Honorable Wm. Kershaw, now of Milwaukee has, as his mother's heir, lately been placed at the head of the remaining Menominees. Mrs. Kershaw was educated in a convent and was a bright, interesting woman.

There is a plot of five acres of land, about half a mile from the village of Big Spring, that was bought by an Indian called "Pretty Man", and is still owned by his heirs. It is used as a burying ground for that part of the Winnebago Tribe. Religious and scalp dances were held on this hill years ago, and the "Green Corn Dance". The last big meeting and dance or "pow-wow" held here was about 1869. At this meeting the aged chief Decorah made his last speech to his tribe. This speech was followed by a chant and march among the camp fires by the braves; then they smoked the "pipe of peace". After the old chief retired the "pow-wow" began and lasted several days and nights. The ruins of an old Indian breast-work and scene of battle is also near Big Spring.

The early settlers had to go to Portage for their mail but this was not as much hardship as it might seem since they received few letters and daily newspapers were unknown.

The school district known as the Stafford school was organized and a school house built in 1857. The first teacher was Francis Crawford. The nearest mill was below Portage and the farmers hauled their grain there to have it ground. Many of them drove oxen so the trip was long and tiresome. A little later a mill was built at Big Spring by Mr. Winchell. The second mill was built by S. W. Pierce. He kept the first postoffice also. The first store was built by Mr. Wilber.

This section of the county has been very prosperous. Farms are large and well cultivated. Few of the old settlers are living and they are widely scattered.