

# Events in Adams County History

Romantic Happenings in Pioneer Days



By JAMES E. JONES

**U**P TO THE POINT to which EVENTS brings the story of the Wisconsin river in this issue, the history of all of the country along the river on up to the pineries is the same. This region about here was primarily Portage county, and for some time after Columbia county was set off. What is now Adams yet belonged to Portage county, with the county seat at Plover, near Stevens Point. Back when lumbering first began Adams county was the highway for "lumber jacks" going to the woods, or traders hauling merchandise.

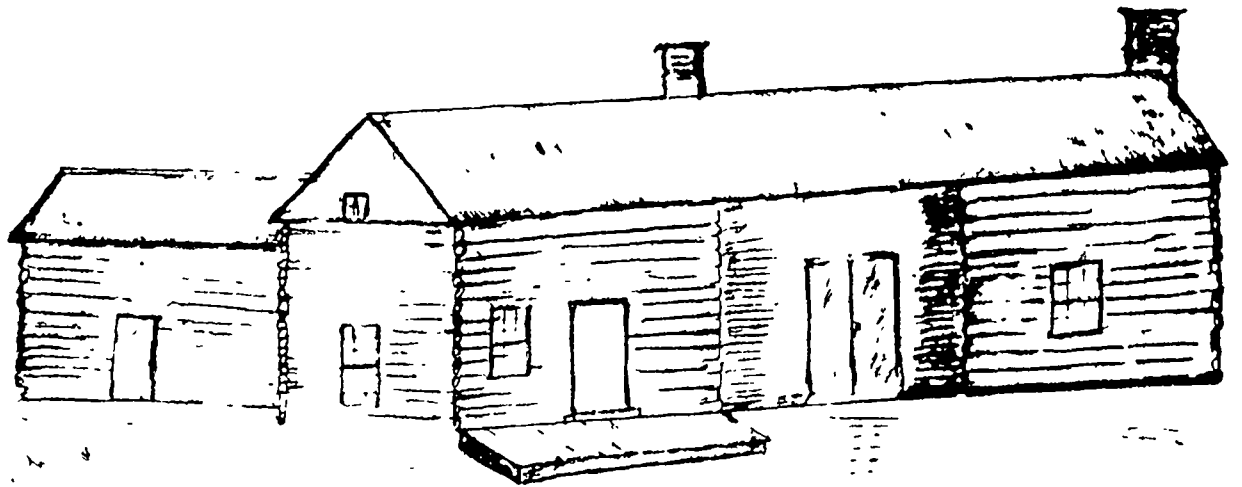
The first trading post in Adams county was kept by Jared Walsworth. He located near Big Spring in 1838, having married an Indian woman he was permitted by the Menomonee Indians to settle among them. He had trouble occasionally with some of them, but generally he was well treated. When he settled there he built a log house, at least fifteen years before the government acquired title to the land west of the river and above Portage. This log house was for years the only house between Fort Winnebago and Stevens Point and it sheltered men of all classes and characters. In 1845, Sylvester settled at Grand Marsh and about the same time Strong located a trading stand eight miles beyond Friendship. Until that time no other settlers had located. George Stowell was the first squatter on Indian land, taking a squatter's claim in 1844, in what is now New Haven.

The first white child born in the county was Jared Pardee, born at the Walsworth house in 1843. He is yet living in St. Paul.

In 1845 a lot of pioneers settled at Big Spring, among them being Amos Landt, Judge Smith, Robert Ramsay, "Uncle" Ward and Winchell. In 1849 Thos. Rich settled at Dell

Prairie Corners—but that settlement will be told of in a future number.

Uri Morse, now a resident of Big Spring, Harrison Phillips and Alma Eighmy had located in New Haven and kept "bach" in an old shack not far from where Bowen's summer cottage now stands. According to tradition that was a jolly trio and their "shack" was a favorite meeting place of the young pioneers. A. B. Stearns, now a resident of Kilbourn, came from the east to the southern part of the state, and by Fort Winnebago in 1849, to Jared Walsworth's. There he became a clerk and the legal and literary man of the new country. He is perhaps the best authority on those events, because he kept a diary. He can tell many inter-



A Pencil Sketch of the Walsworth Cabin before It Was Demolished.

esting incidents of that day and we shall in future articles quote him quite freely.

He relates the circumstances of Uri Morse's arrival with four yoke of oxen and a whip big enough to reach them all. Some later Mr. Stearns was considering a location on what is now Dell Prairie. The question of water was important and Mr. Morse climbed a tree to about thirty feet and looking off toward Big Spring said "there is water—I'm going there." And he started in that direction.

In the accompanying sketch of the Walsworth house a perfect idea of form, dimensions, etc., is given. It can readily be understood what would be the effect trying to lodge a great string of lumbermen. Old settlers tell of men

lying so thick on the floors and in the garret that one could not walk over them.

The first postmaster was Jason Stowell, whose son, John Stowell, now lives in Kilbourn. He came with his family in 1849, erecting the house that yet stands across the road from Harrison Mylrea's, now brown and dingy with age, and loose ends of boards appearing. Near this house, in the picture, are seen several large oak



First Postoffice in Adams County—Home of Jason Stowell.

trees, venerable relics of a once vast forest, which covered the whole face of the country. Trees grew to immense size with no underbrush. For miles under the trees grew tall grass and on side hills deer could be seen. This condition was peculiar to the whole country and was due to forest fires. The rural mail carrier was a product of that county. One day a man came

out from Fort Winnebago on a horse and brought with him letters for men at Walsworth's. Dumping it down on the ground he said "that's the first mail delivery in the west." Later than this Jason Stowell was appointed postmaster.

Along in 1849 and '50 several families moved in from Canada among them being Stafford Wells with fourteen children, Shepherd Pierce with a family of nine, R. Richardson and sons Newell and Freeman, Dexter Stone and mother, H. Rider and family, Ed Pierce, Oscar and Abner Powers. Along about this period Dan'l Eighthmy established a travelers' home out east of the Briggsville road, where Loren Stowell now lives. His place was quite popular and in his quaint way he may be said to have been an ideal tavern keeper of the olden time. He had a big sign on which was painted two geese drinking from a horse trough with the words "Fair Play House Peace and Plenty."

As Adams county was settled in New Haven first, in this article we have designed to open up the question. The only evidence to follow is the traditionary evidence of old citizens—and this appears to be conflicting. In future articles it is expected that reliable data will evolve from discussion incident to this history. The editor of EVENTS will be pleased to be told incidents of interest and also to be afforded reliable corrections in case of error.

In later years, 1848, Adams county was set off in which was included what is now Juneau, with the county seat at Quincy.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

## Rural Free Delivery of Mail

BY JAMES E. JONES

**N**OTHING IN THE marvelous progress of the times more notably affects the interests of the public than that of the postal service, nor is there in anything a greater difference between the old and new. The first mention of postal service in history was the establishing of a postoffice in Boston in 1639. In 1683 Wm Penn established a postoffice in Pennsylvania, and in 1692 England appointed a postmaster general for the American colonies. In 1753 to 1774 Benj. Franklin was postmaster general. In those days a letter cost from six to twenty-five cents in postage, according to the distance, and required weeks and even months to reach destinations that now take but a few hours. In 1790

there were but 75 postoffices in the United States. Now there are about 75,000. Letters weighing one ounce can be sent anywhere in the U. S. or Canada for two cents, or to any civilized country in the world for five cents.

In the early days in this section of Wisconsin settlers had to go almost a day's journey to a postoffice, the most frequent mail service being once a week, in many places at much longer intervals. The first postoffice in Adams county was kept by Jasper Stowell, who lived in a house yet standing across the road from Harrison Mylrea's, just this side of Briggsville. His son, John Stowell, who now lives in Kilbourn, tells some interesting stories of that time. Jasper Stowell was appointed postmaster in 1849.