

# Unpublished History of Trempealeau County

By B. F. HEUSTON, GALESVILLE'S FIRST SETTLER

In this installment of The Unpublished History of Trempealeau County Judge Heuston tells of the building of the first bridge in Trempealeau county, the first wedding outside the Reed family, and the first postoffice, which was at Montoville (now Trempealeau) which was then in La Crosse county. He also tells of the first settlers in the Big Tamarack and on Decora Prairie. The first town meeting for Montoville is reported. The names of the 18 voters are given.

(Continued from Last Week)

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### The First Bridge

The first bridge in the county was built over Beaver Creek on the line of a road surveyed by Jacob Spaulding and Thomas Douglas in about 1850. This road was never recorded, but it was well marked or "blazed" and the miles indicated by notches cut on the stakes set and also on the nearest tree. Early in the spring of 1852 a party went out from the landing, Mr. Reed being of the party, to put in a bridge, but although all was fair and dry at the village, Beaver Creek was found to be over-banks with water. Consequently, that attempt was abandoned. Later in the season a second party was raised for the purpose. Mr. Reed declined to go, but a yoke of his oxen and another of William Nicholls were procured and the bridge made, the party camping out one night. The longest trees of manageable size were but just long enough to reach from bank to bank though at an exceptionally narrow point in Sec. 5, T. 18, R. 9. Like most early bridges, it was covered with poles. When the town of Montville was set off the following year this bridge, was purchased by the town at

its first meeting and was afterward included in the survey of the state road from Montville to Sparta. It stood until the spring of 1856, when, according to the recollection of Mrs. Joshua Rhodes, who has record evidence of dates as a teacher, it was washed away.

In reviewing the situation in 1851, we left Reed's Landing in possession of one advantage—that of less distance from the Black river pineries. We will first consider what came of this. Settlers had increased in Louis Valley between La Crosse and Douglas mills. The people of that valley, now quite a body of settlers, with some aid from La Crosse, managed to construct a fair road over the ridges in the direction of the latter place. At the same time the urgent need of lumber compelled the working of a road from the settlement to Douglas Mills; and a fact that helped, was that these great hills were so near the settlement that parties who worked on them during the day could return to their homes at night. Thus a wagon road was made to Black river with no effort on the part of the lumbermen, as was contemplated by them for the Reed's Landing road. Nor was this all. About this time the method of lumbering had changed. In 1851, by a plan of D. B. Sears, of Moline, Ill., logs were slabbed and "ripped" (divided) once or twice into "cants," as they were called, and floated down the Black river and rafted at its mouth for their final destination. This new method began to throw forces of lumbermen along the chutes of Black river and below Reeds. Closely following this came the process of running the logs entire and the formation of logging companies, with the

erection of mills at Onalaska and La Crosse for sawing a portion of them, were events of quick succession if not all of the present year. Thus La Crosse became identified with Black river interests and our Reed's Landing was thrown entirely out of the range of lumbering operations, so that the contemplated road from Reed's to Douglas Mills was never opened in the way of a general transportation enterprise.

Another source of depression was still more formidable.

When the two villages had been platted it was discovered that there was not a man of capital in the list of proprietors who did not possess a deeper interest in another, if not a rival place. This was conspicuously true of the La Crosse proprietors, who would have witnessed their destruction with as much composure as their prosperity. Even Hammond was still nursing his dying business at the chute which bore his name. Reed was dividing his limited means and business experience with farm matters at Little Tamarack. Winkelman was understood to have a brighter prospect in a town site in Minnesota, and all with any claim to capital, except Reed and Batchelder, were non-residents of the place. And to say that even the steamboat men favored La Crosse—and Winona, too, after it started—to a discrimination against our villages, has only to be mentioned in this day of transportation irregularities to be understood. With these unfavorable conditions, with nothing yet produced in the county back of them, and with no travel through there to support even a hotel, it may be readily conceived that the prosperity of the

villages was characterized by unmistakable moderation.

### Annals 1853

A second spring came on the new settlement which was yet the embodiment of the inhabited region between the lower Black river north to the Chipewewa pines. The winter had been painfully dull except the relief of a mail once a week and the occasional sight of travelers on the ice, going to embryo Winona or infantile St. Paul. Esquire Batchelder had been honored by a call from Kincaid, mentioned in connection with the first warehouse, who brought with him a girl from the Territory of Minnesota over the river to be married. This was the first wedding outside the Reed family, but the parties were non-residents. On February 1, B. F. Heuston and Catherine A. Davidson were wedded, as witnessed by a majority of all the new settlers of the community.

This settlement was in La Crosse county, but measures had been taken to have the town of Montoville set off. The first town meeting was the leading event of April, as was the platting of the village in the April previous.

On the fifth of April, 1853, the first town meeting of the town of Montville in La Crosse county, was held at the house of James Reed and Ira H. Hammond inspectors.

The officers elected were:

Horace E. Owen, chairman; Isaac Noyes and William Nicholls, supervisors; Charles Cameron, town clerk; N. B. Noyes, treasurer; Isaac Noyes, superintendent of schools; James Reed, John Salsman, William Cram, justices of the peace; Alvin Carter, Paul Grignon, John Hess, constables; Ira Hammond, Abram Terpena, assessors; James M. Pierce, sealer of weights and measures; Thomas Marshall, overseer of highway.

The poll list is: William Cram, B. F. Heuston, Jesse Bailey, George Batchelder, Charles Cameron, John Salsman, Paul Grignon, Leonard Johnson, William Nicholls, Francis Drugan, Hiram Owen, Thomas Marshall, Alvin Carter, H. E. Owen, Abram Terpena, Ira H. Hammond, Isaac Noyes and James Reed.

These 18 voters were probably not all the settlers within the precinct, for a year's residence in the state was then, as now, required. Hammond was still living at the mouth of Black river, which bears his name as "Hammond's Chute," then in the town, but which remained in La Crosse county when the new county of Trempealeau was formed. Leonard Johnson was an acquaintance of Cameron, and Hiram Owen was a brother of H. E. Owen. They did not remain long. Bailey is not remembered by the writer.

In the spring Levy's house, built the previous fall, was plastered and occupied by N. B. Grover with goods. Hammond and Heuston dissolved partnership. A transfer of lots occasioned thereby bears date April 14, 1853. The latter, with Cameron, vacated the Douville house two days later, when Isaac Noyes moved into it and took charge of the postoffice as deputy. Here Noyes kept some boarders. It is surmised, for it is related by Mrs. Noyes, that Calvin S. Seymour's family, when they joined him, boarded with them in this house in the winter following. Hammond, who had married Jan. 10, removed into the warehouse during the summer. Angell with family had moved to Louis Valley, across Black river, still owner of his house, of which Cameron and also Heuston rented each a part through the warm season. Cameron planted on his claim sold the following fall to Hollister Wright. Heuston worked the Reed farm two miles north of the village be-

sides establishing his claim near Galesville.

### The First Post Office

The first post office in the county was in operation, according to official information, by the name of Montoville, in La Crosse county, Wis., on Jan. 15, 1853. On June 22, 1854, the county designation was changed to Trempealeau, and July 7, 1856, the office name was changed also to Trempealeau, its present name. The first postmaster was B. F. Heuston, who had traveled to the localities of the now North Bend, Jackson county; Mindoro, La Crosse county, and to La Crosse City for a respectable show of signers to his application. It was opened in the Douville log house and when in the April following Heuston left that house, Isaac Noyes, who succeeded to it, was made deputy and the business remained there for some time. The postmaster, on removing to Gale, resigned, recommending Noyes, who succeeded to the office July 1, 1854.

In the legislative session of 1853 an effort was made by Judge Gale, on behalf of the proprietors of Montoville and Trempealeau, for a county seat. On Feb. 8, 1853, Gale wrote to the writer respecting this movement, in which he said, "I arrived here last Saturday. I find that LaDue (LaDue was member of assembly from La Crosse district and Burns was lieutenant governor residing in La Crosse village) and Burns are dead against your new county. They have got a bill through the assembly setting off the Black River Co. and running through to the Mississippi on the north line of T. 18, leaving your town in La Crosse county.

"I had a conference with them, but they declared you should not have a county seat. . . . If I had sufficient cash . . . I could carry it over their heads, but as it is I cannot do it and the measure is lost for the session."

winter, but went in the spring following for his family and did not return for two years. Patrick Wright settled later, but Hobbs sold to Irvine. All had families except Thomas and Douglas Hunter.

The Galesville settlement began by the arrival of B. F. Heuston with family, Dec. 24, in the valley south of the present plat in a cabin built on a claim made in June.

(To be Continued)

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Hollister Wright bought Charles Cameron's claim on the Big Tamarack (near the Centerville of today). Jacob Holbrook settled farther down the Tamarack creek, where it has been declared, "he had Wright for his nearest neighbor three miles away." Alexander McGilvray and family were at Montoville in same month. George H. Olds boarded at the Batchelders. A. M. Brandenburg arrived in November and lived in the lower story of the Hammond warehouse. Charles Utter came and returned for his family, who came in the winter on the ice. Marvin Pierce arrived in the winter of 1852-3. B. B. Healey was occasionally present this year. Alva Wood came with Holbrook and drove in young stock. Justice Lee and J. Dwight Olds were added to the population. William Bright, with several children, including Robert Bright, grover at Trempealeau, and Mrs. Charles Pickering with her husband, came the same year. Thomas Ferdon is authority for the latter.

The settlement of Decora's Prairie began this year. Mrs. Carey, now of Galesville, states by recollection that she with her husband, Absalom, arrived there about the middle of June and that a family named David Monroe lived in the same house. She thinks C. J. Bryce settled in August. It is certain these persons were there when the Scotch settlement began in the fall.

Patrick Wright and Nelson Hobbs had land, but had not yet settled. The Scottish settlement began with John Hunter and family, including his sons—John with family and Thomas and Douglas—in October. William Dick and David Cook and John Irvine came at the same time, but returning for their families, their permanent settlement was delayed until in November. Richard Collins came with these and stayed the

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