



# LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Reminiscences, 1892. Call Number, La Crosse SC 2460

Myrick, Nathan, 1822-1903

[s.l.]: [s.n.], [s.d.]

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/HJCMJZKLWGJLZ8Z>

This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, US Code).

For information on re-use see:

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/Copyright>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.

**WISCONSIN**  
**Press Association**

110 East Main Street  
MADISON, WIS. 53703

*Clipping Bureau Division*

Melrose Chronicle

OCT 22 1877

# HISTORY OF SOUTHERN JACKSON COUNTY AND CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY THE DOUGLAS FAMILY ARRIVES

CHAPTER XLIV

## Nathan Myrick Early Black River Trader

One of the early and foremost of the pioneers of the Black river was Nathan Myrick, first settler of La Crosse, who established himself as a trader in 1842 although he changed his residence to St. Paul before 1850. No better authority on the early history of La Crosse than Myrick could be found, and quotations from his reminiscences written by him for the 50th anniversary of the settlement of La Crosse are interesting and valuable.

Nathan Myrick was the son of Barnabas Myrick, born at Westport, Essex county, New York, July 7, 1822. Nathan's father, a native of Middleboro, Vt., moved to Westport about 1818 where he continued to reside until his death in 1844. He was a prominent man, having been engaged extensively in various business enterprises; was at one time loan commissioner of the state of New York, and served in the house of representatives of that state about 1834. His business operations included a large mercantile establishment and sawmills at Westport, lumber mills and lumber yards at Albany, canal boats, sail boats on Lake Champlain, iron forges and other enterprises, including a tannery at Westport.

His son Nathan attended district school until he was 10 years old, then entered the academy at Westport, which was founded largely through the efforts of his father. Remaining there about three years he, at the expiration of that time, went to work in his father's tannery at Westport, going to school in the winter. At the age of 18 he had become thoroughly imbued with the western idea and constantly longed for adventure, which was intensified by the mutual desires of a boy friend whose father was a merchant of the same town. Nathan was employed at the store, and one mid-winter evening as they closed the store he asked his father if he could have his time. The father flew into a rage at the suggestion and came back with the statement that the son had had too much time already.

That closed the incident for the time being, but the western urge continued to grow. There being no railroads at that time, the most feasible way of travel was by water after navigation had opened. As spring came the young man with \$100 of savings, some books and clothes, left home on one of his father's boats for Albany.

After commencing his journey he was much pleased to find in his trunk, between the pages of a pocket Bible, an affectionate letter from his mother, enclosing a present of \$15 from her own private purse. He said later: "As soon as I had exhibited my earnest desire to go west by actually making a start from home without seeking pecuniary assistance from my father, he seemed struck with the seriousness of my purpose; and by letter, which he forwarded by my brother to intercept me, offered to restock the tannery at home and make me a present of the plant, or, if I would be better pleased, to stop at the hotel at Albany and remain there until he came, he would start me in a lumber yard at Albany, or some other congenial business.

"But I had a spirit of independence and desire for personal achievement", he continued, "so declined my father's tempting offer and continued on my western journey. My brother traveled on the packet boat with me until we met the packet boat going north on which he took return passage to Whitehall and home, he all the time trying to persuade me to return home. I told him that I had started for the west and could not return home, as many of my friends said that I would return to stay the first night. I went by canal boat to Troy, and rail to Albany, and to Schenectady, and then by packet boat on the canal to Buffalo where I took the steamer Chesapeake to Chicago. I left Chicago, which had then about 5,000 inhabitants, by stage, and went to Galena, Ill., arriving there June 3. There being no boats or stage running to Prairie du Chien, I hired a team and went from there directly to Prairie du Chien, where I arrived June 5, 1841. I had with me a letter of introduction from General Hunter, of Westport, who had visited Prairie du Chien some years before, to H. L. Dousman, then in charge of the American Fur Company, Alexander McGregor and Judge Lockwood."

File 280  
MS  
F902L14  
m4

St. Paul, Minn., Jan. 28", 1892

Hon. F. A. Copeland, Mayor,  
La Crosse, Wis.

My Dear Mayor:-

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed letter of January 22", 1892, enclosing and officially transmitting to me an engrossed copy of the preamble and resolution passed by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse, wherein a kind invitation is extended to me to be present on the 10" of February, 1892, the Fiftieth anniversary of the settlement of La Crosse, and also requesting me to permit a portrait of myself to be placed in the new City Hall or in the public Library.

I cannot express in words the great pleasure which this most marked and distinguished invitation and request has brought to me. The deepest feelings of respect for the City of La Crosse, which now seem in volume doubled by this distinguished act of kindness, are, at this moment, so mingled with <sup>all</sup> my own reminiscences of the settlement of La Crosse, that it is now almost impossible for me to set in phrase my appreciation of the high consideration thus paid me.

To explain to you briefly these feelings, go back with me fifty years, and stand, with a few companions, in an uncivilized and unsettled place on the bank of the Mississippi River. While standing there in such desolate spot, contemplate and imagine if possible that within such fifty years, out from the sands of the -----  
echoing shore there shall arise a populous and modern metropolis, from whose center the eagle engines shall hourly scream their flight to all the distant seas; whose hills shall be dotted with churches, dedicated



to the ever-living God; upon whose slopes and plains permanent institutions of education, science and learning shall be erected, and upon whose tributary waters the commerce of a hundred millioned republic shall be carried. This may seem possible. You may dream this,--so did many of the first settlers of the republic dream. But imagine, if you can, that, even under the lofty policy of this republic, before your own humble career shall be ended, that there will be found the high magnanimity and thoughtful consideration, under whose tender influences the great business interests of such metropolis shall pause in the exercise of their infinite energies to remember the young and unlettered trader who first erected a cabin on the site of the City of La Crosse. I therefore feel all the respect and humility which this confusing train of thought engenders, and I cannot write these down in words.

I most heartily desire that the 10th of February next shall be a glorious holiday to the good citizens of LaCrosse, on which all the old <sup>settlers</sup> may again join hands with the new,--pledging to each other alike, with the unanimity ever necessary to metropolitan advance, a loyal devotion to the liberties, civilization, security and peace of the City of LaCrosse.

It is with the deepest regret that I am compelled to inform you that both my health and the emergencies of my business will require that I shall be, upon February 10th, in the distant State of California, but my heart will be with you on that day, as my affections and my hopes are with you ever. It seems strange that the City of LaCrosse, which is, in the single consideration of early settlement, somewhat of a child of mine, should, by its own graceful act, make me a child of itself.

My dear Mayor, in your letter you asked me, in case it should not be convenient for me to be with you on the 50th anniversary, that I send you a brief account of my life, and reminiscences in relation to the settlement of LaCrosse. This I have concluded to do, not in any spirit



of vain-glory, but, by an effort, overcoming a modesty with which I think your people are familiar. And, prompted by a sense of duty, and from the pleasure of doing, so far as is in my power, whatever may be requested of me by the City of LaCrosse, I will herein give you the modest circumstances of my life, and so far as I can, complete the chain of reminiscences which have already been put on record in relation to the settlement of LaCrosse.

I have the honor to inform you that I have this day forwarded to the City of LaCrosse, in your care as Mayor, a portrait of myself. It is my desire, dear Mayor, if it shall so please the City, that this portrait be placed in the Public Library.

Permit me to relate to you the circumstances of my life as follows:-

I am the son of Barnabas Myrick and Lovina Bigelow, who were married about 1819. I was born at Westport, Essex County, N. Y. on July 7th, 1822. My father had removed from Middlebury, Vt. to Essex County about 1815, and continued to reside at Westport until his death in 1844. During his life in New York he was actively engaged in business of various forms; was at one time Loan Commissioner of the State of New York, and served in the House of Representatives of that State about 1834. I was one of eight children, five of whom lived past their majority. These were Ira Myrick, now living at Elysian, Minn., Louisa Myrick, now married to Hiram Buchlamp, of Brandon, Vt., the late Andrew Jackson Myrick, who removed to Minnesota in 1852 and was murdered by Indians at the Sioux Agency near Redwood in August, 1862, Abigail Myrick, who was married during the 40's to Stephen Goodall, who afterwards removed to Minnesota and lived at Elysian. The other children were Hiram, Charles, and Martin Van Buren Myrick.

My mother died in Brandon, Vt. while on a visit to her daughter Louisa in 1857, and was buried at Westport, N. Y. My paternal grandfather was Brazilla Myrick, who was born in Vermont and served in the Revolutionary War. He was a pensioner of the Government at the time of his death in 1841, at Westport, where he was buried. His wife survived him until 1849, and was buried with her husband.

I went to the District School until about ten years of age, and was then entered in the Academy at Westport, which was founded largely through the efforts of my father. I remained there about three years and at the expiration of that term was employed by my father in his tannery at Westport, going to school in the winter. Afterwards I was employed in a general store owned by my father in Westport, and remained there until 1841. At that time I was 18 years of age, and was an intimate friend of the late Mayor Hatch of Minnesota, who then worked for his father in a rival store in Westport. We both became enthusiastic over the great West, at that time an almost unknown country. The railroads were not then built, and the travel to the west was by canal boat to Lake Erie and by steam boat to Chicago.

My father was an austere man, thoroughly engrossed by many enterprises other than those heretofore enumerated, -owning and operating canal boats and sail boats on Lake Champlain, lumber mills and lumber yards at Albany, saw mills at Westport, iron forges and other enterprises. I received permission from him to take my time prior to arriving at majority, and determined to seek fortune in the west. My friend, the late Major Hatch, intended to accompany me, but was detained in New York by the serious illness of his mother. I started from home with an outfit of about \$100, my own savings, being however, well provided with books and clothing. After commencing my journey I was very much pleased to



find in my trunk, between the pages of a pocket bible, an affectionate letter from my mother, enclosing a present of \$15, from her own private purse. As soon as I had exhibited my earnest desire to go west by actually making a start from home without seeking pecuniary assistance from my father, he seemed struck with the seriousness of my purpose and by letter which he forwarded to intercept me, offered to restock the tannery at home and make me a present of the plant, or, if I would be better pleased, he would start me in a lumber yard at Albany, or some other congenial business. But I had that sense of independence and desire for personal achievement that I declined my father's very tempting offer and continued on my western journey. I went by canal boat to Troy, and then by packet boat on the canal to Buffalo, where I took the steamer Chesapeake to Chicago. I left Chicago, which had then about 5000 inhabitants, by stage, and went to Galena, Ills., arriving there June 3rd, and from there directly to Prairie du Chien, where I arrived by team June 5th. My immediate object in going to Prairie du Chien was to visit some former acquaintances from Westport who were then living at the former place. I had with me a letter of introduction from Gen. Hunter of Westport, who had visited Prairie du Chien some years before, to H. L. Dousman, then in charge of the American Fur Company, Alexander McGregor and Judge Lockwood. Upon presenting these letters I was very kindly received by the gentlemen named, but they declined to employ me in any service on account of my inability to speak Indian and my inexperience in Indian trading. I remained at the hotel until my funds were nearly exhausted, being unable in the meantime to secure employment. Among other efforts in that direction, I applied to the proprietor of a tannery which had just been started in the north part of Prairie du Chien. This tannery was not enclosed, the vats being out in the open air. The proprietor, notwithstanding my representations of knowledge of the business would not offer me more than \$15 a month, which I declined.



My first adventure was with one H. J. B. Miller, who was at that time engaged in the butcher's business at Prairie du Chien. He was desirous of making a trip to Cedar River, about one hundred miles west of Prairie du Chien, into an uncivilized country, occupied only by Indians. Mr. Miller happened to mention in my presence that if he could secure some one to go with him he would like to make this trip for the purpose of seeing the country and doing a little shooting if any profitable hunting could be found. I promptly offered to accompany Mr. Miller, and we set out in a single wagon for Cedar River, having obtained permission from Gen. Brooks, in command of Fort Crawford, at Prairie du Chien, and afterwards ~~from~~ from the commanding officer of Fort Atkinson, near the Turkey River Agency. It was necessary to get permission from the military authorities in order to go into the Indian country. There had been a fight between two tribes of Indians a few days before our arrival at Cedar River. It was during this trip that Mr. Miller and myself became thoroughly acquainted with each other, and commenced the friendship which finally led to our entering into co-partnership.

After our return from this Cedar River trip I was employed in the Post office at Prairie du Chien, receiving only my board for my services. <sup>I had only worked there a few weeks when I was taken sick.</sup> It had been arranged between Mr. Miller and myself that we should make a trading trip to the Turkey River Agency, permission having been granted upon our application, and the arrangements almost completed, but my illness prevented my joining this adventure, Mr. Miller going out alone. Mr. David Clark, an acquaintance of mine, was very attentive to me during my illness, but his attention was in a characteristic western way, and may be appropriately referred to here. Mr. Clark was satisfied that I was taken with a fever, and informed me that he would either cure me or kill me, and proceeded to pour ice water upon the back of my head

as long as I could endure it, keeping up this operation for about an hour very nearly accomplishing the alternative of killing the patient, but very fortunately killing the fever as intended. Upon my recovery I returned to the post office where I remained a few weeks. About this time I formed the acquaintance of Eben Weld, who had made a trip up the Mississippi on horseback, as far as Fountain City, and who reported in a conversation with me, on the occasion of his calling at the office for his mail, that there were a number of good points up the river, to trade with the Indians, and particularly at Prairie <sup>La Crosse</sup> ~~du Chien~~. The post master at this time was J. B. Brisbois, who maintained a number of Indian trading posts on the Mississippi River, and who was well acquainted with the points along the river. Mr. Brisbois told me that the American Fur Co. had at one time had some timber cut, and had started to make a claim at Prairie La Crosse, but that the steamers had burned up the timber, and the claim had never been perfected. Mr. Brisbois' advice was favorable to the establishment of a trading post at La Crosse. I made arrangements with Mr. Weld to establish a post there, if we could secure a stock of goods and conveyance for the same up the river. I obtained from General Brocks, in command of Ft. Crawford, the loan of a government keel boat, partially decked over and pointed at both ends, which would carry forty tons. This I repaired and fully decked over, and loaded with a stock of goods obtained from every merchant in Prairie du Chien, except H. L. Dousman of the American Fur Co., who was under contract with the Indian trader living about four miles from the place where I intended to go. While I was getting ready to leave, Mr. Kurtz, a Mormon from Nauvoo came up with some goods which he wished to carry up the river. I had



his goods loaded on our boat and Mr. Kurtz and two or three men in his employ assisted to pole the craft up to Prairie La Crosse, where it was unloaded. These goods were unloaded at the place where the public landing now is, and sent up Black River. The last money which I had was expended in the purchase of crackers from the late Louis Robert afterwards one of the founders of St. Paul, who was at that time engaged in closing up his business in the expectation of removing to the upper Mississippi. After this purchase there remained the sum of ten cents which I told Mr. Robert I was going to keep for seed. The weather was pleasant, and leaving Prairie du Chien on November 4th, we arrived at our destination on November 9th. We went ashore and looked around, and found that there was no timber there, nothing but a few shrubs, and so we went over to the Island. On the Island we built a cabin of logs and puncheons, and prepared for our trade with the Indians.

At the time of our arrival there was not a man, either white or Indian at the place. The Indians had all gone to the Turkey River Agency to draw their money and supplies. There was not a habitation of any kind about the place. There was a dispute at one time as to who was the founder of La Crosse. We had quite a controversy over it, looked up the record, and it was finally decided that I was the first settler. If there was anyone near there at the time I came they must have settled some miles further down the river. We put up our cabin, and after waiting perhaps ten days, the Indians returned with plenty of money, and we had a pretty good trade. On the 18th of December I started for Prairie du Chien for more goods. I took some provisions with me and about \$100. in silver. I did not know how to carry the money, so I put



some in one pocket and some in another. I found it difficult to cross Coon Creek, but finally found a tree felled toward me across the river. This was my only chance, so I threw my pack over, and jumped for the tree top. I sank into the water up to my neck, but caught hold of the limbs and fortunately got out. After I had started across Coon Creek it commenced to snow. I was following the Indian trail down, and I met a squaw. I tried to speak to her and find out where I could get shelter, but she seemed afraid, and turned off the track. I followed her track through the snow, and came across quite a camp of Indians. They were all drunk and were having a dance. The squaw came out, and as she could speak a little English, told me they were good Indians. I dried my clothes the best I could, and tried to sleep in a wigwam. I laid in such a position that an Indian could not get in or out of the wigwam without stumbling over me. They kept up their dancing all night, and kept coming in and out of the wigwam, so I didn't get much sleep. I didn't know what those drunken Indians might do, although the squaw told me they were good Indians. The next morning I was so stiff that I couldn't travel very much. I came across a Frenchman who was going to Prairie du Chien. He wanted to know if I would go down with him, and I said I would if he didn't travel too fast. We went on the rest of the day. Most of the time I could hardly keep in sight of him, for he was pretty good traveler.

We put up at a deserted cabin that night, and before I went to sleep I took off all my clothes and went out and rolled in the snow. I had heard that that was good for a man who was as stiff and tired as I was, and it worked very well in my case. About ten miles above Prairie du Chien I found Alexis Baylie, with a flat boat load of goods frozen up in

the ice. I had known him the summer previous, and stayed with him the balance of that day and night going on to Prairie du Chien the next day. I hired six or eight Frenchmen at Prairie du Chien with their teams--one horse teams,- and loaded them up with goods and provisions and drove up on the ice to the Island opposite to Prairie La Crosse, taking three days to the trip. The first night out I slept in the snow. It was my first experience of that kind, and I enjoyed it first rate. When I got back we had quite a little experience with the Indians.

One evening just as we were finishing supper, two Indians came in and we invited them to sit down and eat supper, which they did. They then went away, and in about half an hour one of them came back. He asked for a number of little things, and we finally refused to give him anything more. Then he went away, and soon came back with a gun. I saw that his gun was loaded, and caught hold of it and knocked the priming out. I kept the muzzle of the gun past my side and followed him out, when we were a few rods from the house I let go of the gun and went back. When I got to the door I looked back over my shoulder and saw him aiming the gun at me. The gun snapped as the priming had been knocked out. Then he primed the gun again and fired a shot. I jumped into the house closed the door and told Weld we were going to have trouble, and to load up the guns. He said he didn't think it was any use, but some more Indians came up, and we fastened the door and loaded up some guns. There was a window in the cabin, and I rolled some barrels up and watched them out of that. Pretty soon a shot came through the window, and I got down from there. Weld fired at one Indian who got behind a tree. I attempted to fire at another who was running away, but the gun snapped.



The Indians commenced firing in, and they had the door fairly riddled with bullets. We stayed in there, and were going to make a fight if they got into our place. After a while they went away, and some one came and knocked on the door. I asked if it was a white man or an Indian. He said that he was part white. I opened the door and found that it was Alexis Baylie. He had heard the firing and came over from his teams which he had left on the river where he was traveling, to see what the matter was. He asked the Indians what was the matter, and they said that we had commenced firing first. Baylie went on down to a trader's cabin further down the river. He saw the Indian that had commenced the trouble going ahead of him down to this cabin. The Indian when he saw him turned out of the trail and let him go by. After he had passed the Indian fired at him, and Baylie heard the bullet whistle past his head.

When he got down to the trader's cabin the Indian soon came in. He asked the Indian what was the matter, and the Indian said that he had fired at a lump of ice. I thought at the time that perhaps this trader did not like the idea of having us so close to his business, and tried to make trouble for us with the Indians.

We told the Indians there that if this Indian ever came back we were going to kill him. We thought that perhaps this trouble would hurt our trade. One day after quite a while this same Indian came into the cabin with several others. I went and told Weld that this Indian was there, and asked him what we had better do about it. We made up our minds that we had better not pay any attention to him, and pretend not to recognize him. He stayed around there some time. He always was an



ugly Indian and inclined to make trouble. I have often thought since then that if we had shot any of the Indians we would have both been killed, as there were two or three Indians around there, but I didn't think of that at all at the time of the excitement. The gun which I had was a very long barreled gun; it must have been six feet long.

After the excitement was over I found that I had loaded the gun nearly to the muzzle. Every time I heard a shot I must have put in a load. I was afraid to shoot the gun off, and I couldn't get any of the Indians to shoot it off, so I put it against a stump, and fired it off with a slow match. I expected that it would blow the gun to pieces, but it did not.

There is another instance that I recollect. I was sitting on the counter in the store, when an Indian came in, and sat down on the counter beside me. He put his left arm around me, and pulled out his knife with his right hand and drew back to stab me. I shook his arm off and threw him off the counter. Then I jumped behind the counter and put my hand under it as if I had a pistol. He thought I had, and ran away. I never knew what was the cause of his wanting to kill me. He acted as if he was in earnest, and I think he was. During the winter I cut 100 cords of wood, and hauled it down to the river on a hand sled. We also cut and prepared logs and puncheons, and put up a cabin over ~~on~~ the main land a place about 20 x 30. After we had moved over there I had another little experience. We had built this cabin and I had gone to Galena for lime and brick and built the chimney on it with my own hands. This was the first chimney ever erected in La Crosse and remained there until

the building was torn down in the '50's.

There was a cellar under the cabin, about ten feet square, walled up with round logs. One day as we were coming up to the house we saw a big snake lying on the threshold. It ran into the house and went down into the cellar when it saw us coming. We got a gun and loaded it up to shoot him. Pretty soon he came out on the threshold again, and we fired. It filled the room so full of smoke that we couldn't see in for two or three minutes; then we saw the track of the snake in the sand where he had gone into the cellar. This building of ours was a story and a half high, and in the attick I had some boards laid across on the ends of the logs and slept there. I always dream about a snake after killing one. I was dreaming all night that the snake was in bed with me, and got up, two or three times in the night to look around. The next day Weld said that he felt like having a smoke. I told him that he would find some tomahawk pipes and stone pipes up in the attick behind my bed. There were no stairs, only a steep ladder leading up into the attick. He went up and was reaching over and had just taken hold of a tomahawk pipe when he discovered the snake behind the bed. It drew back its head and hissed at him. He threw the pipe at it and cut it partly in two. It happened to be a tomahawk pipe which he had in his hand. The snake was five or six feet long. I never could understand how the snake was able to come up from the cellar and into the attick and get around behind the bed. I haven't the least doubt but the snake was up there by the bed while I dreamed of it.

At that time the trading was pretty good. It was quite a central point, a number of rivers came in there; Black, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Rock, Bad Axe and Coon Creek, where the Indians used to hunt.



In the spring I went down to Prairie du Chien. I returned the government keel boat, and took my stock of furs for sale. At the same time H. J. B. Miller was going down with a canoe load of furs. He had the largest canoe that I ever saw. It must have been thirty of forty feet long. I took his furs on board and we went on to Prairie di Chien. Before that time Mr. Weld had become dissatisfied and wanted to go up to Fort Snelling, and we dissolved partnership. I afterwards met him there in '44. He was Indian farmer there? I made a proposition to Mr. Miller to get a stock of goods and go back and trade at LaCrosse in equal partnership. This proposition he entertained favorably and we went up there with a load of provisions on Miller's canoe. Afterwards Miller went backhand got several yoke of cattle, the first that were ever used in La Crosse.

During that summer an Indian challenged me to run a foot race. It happened that there was no one around there; no Indians and Miller had gone away somewhere. Of course he had no money, and we put up a lot of silver ear bobs. We put them on a stake a hundred yards off, and the first one there was to take them. It so happened that I won the race, though I think he would have beaten me if we had run a few yards more. I afterwards learned that he was the greatest runner in his tribe. After that a number of other Indians challenged me to run. They thought I must be quite a runner if I had beaten this man, but I had made my reputation, and I refused to hazard it again.

The same year a man named William Burnnell came up, and several persons came up in <sup>1843 and</sup> 1844, and settled on Black River. In '43 Peter Cameron came up. Prior to that Kunz & Scott had come up and made a claim and then went away. Afterwards Cameron came, and saw that this claim had been abandoned and settled on it. Major Hatch, Asa White and



and Col. Mills also came up, and in '42 Mr. Nicholas, James O'Neil and McCollom came up. Dr. Snough or "Dutch Doc." as we called him, and <sup>Phillip Jacobs started a trading house in '43.</sup> John Morrison, John and William Levis and Andrew Shepard went up Black River in '43.

In '44 Thomas and Peter Hoe, William Pauley and Andrew Ferguson came up the river and made a settlement at Black River. White & Berg, Mormons, from Nauvoo, came up and located on Black River. Dr. Bunnell and his family, consisting of wife and two daughters, one married and the other single, came from Detroit. The married daughter, shortly after their arrival, told me that we would have a railroad at LaCrosse, either from Milwaukee or Green Bay. She was the first person that I ever heard speak of a railroad coming to LaCrosse.

In 1843 I made a visit home to buy some goods. My father went down to New York with me, as he had some business there---wanted to get capital for some enterprise he was starting. I bought my goods and stored them at Troy. On the 17th of August I was married to Miss Rebecca Ismon at Cherlotte, Vermont. In September I was ready to start back. My money had given out and I borrowed five hundred dollars from Gen. Hunter. Before we left my father gave us a second day wedding, and invited in the people from the entire county. He was so well known, and had such a number of acquaintances, that it was the largest affair of the kind that had ever been given in Westport. We went by a fast freight boat on the canal, stopping at Troy and taking the goods which I had purchased. We reached Chicago by boat, and then hired three teams to take my goods to Galena. We had with us on this trip a young lady named Pearson who wished to visit some friends in Illinois. I told her that I would take her with us if she would stay with us the first winter and visit her friends in the spring. This she did and was company for my

wife the first winter. We had a very pleasant trip, though a very slow one, stopping at Galena nine days while waiting for a boat.

That summer while I was gone Miller had built a barn where the Cameron House now stands, and also a warehouse situated on what is now the southwest corner of Front and State streets. During the summer of 1843 and 1844 we had furnished provisions to the Mormons on Black River and taken their pay in logs. These I logade into rafts and run them down to St. Louis. These were the first rafts run from Black River to St. Louis. The Mormons on Black River left that summer and went back to Nauvoo. In the fall they returned with twenty or thirty families and settled at what is now called Mormon Cooley. The men worked at cutting cord wood and some of them went up Black River. I furnished them with provisions, getting pay in lumber. The next fall they burned all their buildings and went back to Nauvoo. I managed to get a settlement with them before they left.

The mails were brought up the river to Fort Snelling twice a month. There was a little boat, the Rock River that ran there first; afterwards other boats were put on; in 1843 the Otter, in 1844 the Argo, and in '45 the American Fur Company put on a boat called the Lynx. After that there were the Dr. Franklin, the Senator, and some other boats which I do not remember. In '42 I made a trip to St. Paul on the Rock River. At that time there were about 30 or 40 houses at Pig's Eye, and only two or three at St. Paul. I also made a trading trip up the river with Cameron. We had a very hard trip, but a very profitable one.

In 1843 I was appointed Postmaster at LaCrosse,--being the first Postmaster at that point. This position I afterwards resigned in favor



## Major Hatch.

Miss Pearson, who came out with us, went back to Illinois in 1844, and in that summer Mr. Miller went to Illinois and married her and brought her back to LaCrosse. Mrs. Miller and my wife were the first two white women at LaCrosse. In 1845 Major Hatch came up from Holme<sup>s</sup>'s Landing and put up a place in LaCrosse, also a store. In '45 J. C. Davis, William Gibbs, Henry O'Neil, O. H. Dibble, Calvin Potter, William Moran and John Perry went up Black River for trading purposes. O. H. Dibble on his return to LaCrosse said that he had discovered a mill site on the west forks of Black River, where there was good power for a saw mill. I made arrangements with him to go up there and build a saw mill in partnership. We purchased the machinery and put up an old fashioned double mill in 1846. We ran the mill in the fall of '46 and '47. In 1847 I had three rafts of logs, and Jacob Spaulding had seven rafts. I sold my logs, to Spaulding, and he went on to St. Louis with them. We had sent to St. Louis and hired about 100 men to take the rafts down. We had made an arrangement to run the saw mills the next summer, but while there was he was away a freshet, which almost completely destroyed the mills. When Spaulding came back he said that the river had been so low that the logs had stuck on every snag and sand bar in the river, and had taken up so much time that he didn't make any thing out of the trip. I told him that the freshet had about broke me, and it appeared that this trip had done the same by him, and asked him what he would take for break the <sup>contract</sup> to rebuild and run the mills. He said that he would break the contract for \$250. I paid him that amount.

The government surveyed the lands in '45 or '46, but they were not put on the market until January '48. I supposed that we had the right

to preempt the land, but we had not complied with the preemption law and so had to take our chances on bidding in our land. When the land was advertised for sale on the 17th of January, 1848, Peterson, Cameron, Asa White, Dr. Snough and myself went up to bid in our land. We had no trouble, as there was no one to bid against us, so we got the land for \$1.25 an acre. I secured the original townsite of about 100 acres 80 acres on what was called the Miller farm, 160 acres at the lower end of the townsite, and 70 acres of the Bunnell farm, -now Burns' addition to La Crosse.

I recollect an event that happened in 1842. There was a son of B Blind Decorah, the great Indian hunter who was out deer shooting. He wounded a deer, and was following him, and had thrown his blanket away so as not to be encumbered, as the deer crossed the river, he became wet and being without a blanket had frozen to death. We found him where he had walked around a tree until he had got numb and laid down. At the request of the old chief I had a coffin made for him. He was found frozen in a sitting position, and we had to make a square box to bury him in. A number of the Indians came down, and they got up quite a fight there. Some of them claimed the Indian had stolen his blanket and that was the reason he has frozen. In the course of the row the coffin got knocked over and the corpse was thrown out on the floor. I quieted them down and got the corpse back into the box. I had a grave dug and buried him in it, at the request of the old chief, and put up a fence around the grave and a cross at the head. When the chief and his family would come there they would put baskets of fruit on the grave for him to feed on on his way to the Happy Hunting Ground. I have heard it claimed that LaCrosse got its name from this cross, which was on what is



now Front Street, between State and Main Streets, and was there until the street was graded in '51 or '52. We had quite a lengthy controversy at the time as to the origin of the name, in which I maintained the theory that it was given to the place because the Indians used to come there to play the game of LaCrosse, and after much argument and discussion it was decided that this version was correct.

In 1846 Joseph Leavitt and wife arrived at LaCrosse and purchased from Jacob Spaulding the building put up by Col. Mills. Leavitt and Dr. Snough formed a partnership, and the year following they put up a two story frame building, which was the first frame building erected in LaCrosse. Our first child was born at Prairie du Chien in 1844 and died at LaCrosse, <sup>in 1845.</sup> It was buried in the old burying ground there, and afterwards removed to the Cemetery. The date on the slab is the oldest in the Cemetery.

In 1846 Henry Atchison, James Day, John Elder, Daniel Couseran a man named Brockway and Robert Garrett arrived there. Fetherline and wife came also, and remained at LaCrosse, the rest going up Black River. Owing to the freshets in '47 and the heavy losses I had sustained, I determined to leave La Crosse and come up the river, in company with H. M. Rice. I came to St. Paul and from there went to Sauk Rapids; remained there about a year and then returned to St. Paul, where I have lived almost all the time since.

Before leaving LaCrosse I deeded to H. J. B. Miller a half interest in the townsite, and deeded to the parties who had built houses there the lots on which they had built. The original survey of LaCrosse was never put on record. In 1851 there was a new survey made, but no particular changes were made from the old one, and this survey was put on record.

In 1851 Timothy Burns, Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin, came to St. Paul with a letter of introduction from H. L. Dousman, and wanted to buy my interest in LaCrosse. I sold him my half interest in the original townsite, and the other property, which I held there. I sold it for part cash and the balance on two years time. The first payment was made and for the second payment I took back one-fourth interest in the original townsite of LaCrosse. I have been selling lots off and on ever since, and still hold a number of lots in LaCrosse. Although I made no improvements in LaCrosse, I find from my books that I have paid out over \$70,000 in taxes etc. on property there.

Since arriving in Minnesota, I established trading posts at Sauk Rapids, Itasca, Sauk Center, St. Peter, Yellow Medicine, Big Stone, Fort Ransom, Fort Seward now Jamestown, at Pembina and other places.

My business connection with the Sioux Indians was closed at the time of the outbreak in 1862, but my trading at the points in Dakota was continued until 1876, when I retired from the business.

Since that time I have been engaged chiefly in the real estate business.

I have now, dear Mayor, performed as well as lies within my power, the things requested of me by the City of LaCrosse, and, with the deepest gratitude for the kindness exhibited towards me, and expressing again the great affection for the City and its people, which, I assure you, will continue with me as long as I shall live, I have the honor to subscribe myself,

With great consideration,

Your most obedient servant.

Signed, Nathan Myrick.