



# **The history of the city of Manitowoc, Wisconsin: its pioneer and early industries prior to 1850. Monograph 52 1984**

Gass, Otto

Manitowoc, Wisconsin: Manitowoc County Historical Society, 1984

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# The History of the City of Manitowoc, Wisconsin Its Pioneer and Early Industries Prior to 1850

By: Otto Gass  
Of the North Side High School  
Class of 1908

FEB 4 1984

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We have published in our newsletters a number of articles relating to the early history of Manitowoc County. It might seem that a monograph relating to this topic would be superfluous. We are pleased to make this the topic for our first issue in the 1984 series, nevertheless.

There are two reasons for having chosen this as the first in the 1984 series of monographs, namely:

1. The monograph relates to the history of Manitowoc from 1836 to about 1850 . . . a less well-known period of our history. The Panic of 1837 had an adverse effect on our early history. Also, this area was not well-known in 1835 as a good place in which to begin a new life on the American frontier. These years were important in the efforts of the early settlers to induce people to work and live here. It was an important time in our history for immigration from Europe which began in the mid-1840's, and as many heard about the "Paradise" to be found on the shores of Lake Michigan in Wisconsin, they came here in ever greater numbers.

2. The author of this monograph is a school boy, who in 1908 was given a class project to do research on the early history of Manitowoc. We are always pleased to use manuscripts of this kind. We would like to receive more manuscripts from youthful historians. Monograph No. 40 in the series was also written by a high school student.

## PREFACE

The following resolution which forms a part of the record of the proceedings of the Library Board of Manitowoc city, explains sufficiently the preliminary action leading to the composition of the following presentation:

"Resolved, That there be, and there hereby is, made to the senior classes of the High schools of Manitowoc city and the Training school of Manitowoc county, the following proposition:

1. Written presentations are invited upon subjects of local history, including local biography; each paper must be neatly prepared in typewriting in readiness for the printer, and contain not less than 10,000 nor more than 15,000 words; no name and no designation of the author shall be upon

or appended to the manuscript, but upon a separate accompanying slip shall be given the name of the author and the school of whose senior class he or she is a member. Such manuscript shall be delivered by the principal of the school to the president of the Library Board not later than the 20th of May in each year.

2. Such papers shall be placed in the hands of three judges to be selected by this board who shall report in writing ranking them first, second, third, etc., according to their respective merits, and file such report with the chairman of the Library Board not later than the 15th day of June each year. The student who has first place according to the markings of the majority of judges shall be declared the winner. In case no such decision be reached the sum of the ranks shall be taken and the lowest sum shall win. The subjects for the papers of each year will be announced by this board on or before the first day of October.

3. The paper that shall by the judges be awarded first place will be printed by this board and neatly bound in book form, together with any maps or illustrations that may accompany the same as integral parts thereof, and shall be distributed as follows: One or more copies shall be preserved in the library to aid in forming a special set of books; one copy shall be delivered to each High School and to the County Training School in said city; one copy shall be delivered to the State Historical Society, and twenty-five copies delivered to the author.

4. This board shall announce its award according to the decision of the judges giving the names of those winning first and second places and communicate such award to the principals of said schools as soon as practicable and before commencement day of the same year.

5. All manuscripts submitted will be considered the property of the Library and kept for future use either by students or by the Library Board."

Owing to delays incident to a new undertaking the subject for the first essay was not announced to the schools as early as contemplated in the above resolution or as it will be announced in the future. Perhaps for this reason but one school entered the competition, namely, the North Side High School. From this school there were five contestants. The essays were submitted to a committee consisting of Miss Emily Richter, Rev. William Hooton and Rev. John T. O'Leary who kindly consented to undertake the labor of judging the manuscripts. Their decision awarded the prize to Otto Gass.

The Library Board sends out this first volume of local history — bound in the colors of the High School to which its author belonged — hoping it is the first of an honorable series which will do much to rescue the narrative of the foundation and growth of our city from the oblivion into which it would otherwise fall. We trust also that this undertaking will stimulate the desire for original study and independent research, and that it may bind still more closely together those great educational factors, the Library and the Schools.

No member of the Library Board has attempted to verify the facts presented in this essay. We believe the author has exercised due diligence. The facts are not often of record but are stored in the retentive memories of the few remaining early settlers, and we believe them to be accurate, though sometimes memories differ as to certain events. No better sources of information can now or hereafter be available and it is fortunate that the recollections of such surviving pioneers as are mentioned in the essay have been put in imperishable form, before it is too late.

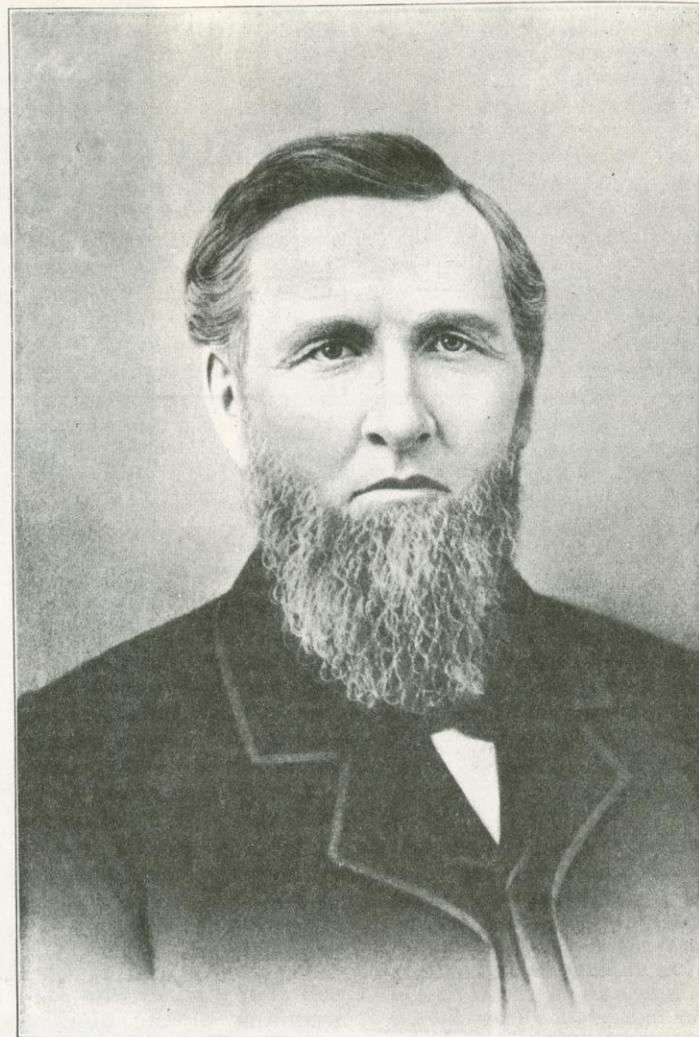
*Eva M. Anderson  
V. P., Library Board*

The reader will not realize what a task it is to get information and facts concerning the early history of Manitowoc. No definite record has been kept; no history written; all that can be obtained in regard to the early history is from some meagre facts which are found merely in connection with other cities and in which Manitowoc is only mentioned as a stopping or resting place of the traveler or settler who was on his way to Green Bay or some other city. The only pioneers left, to whose retentive memory I am indebted to a great extent for the facts contained in this history, are Mr. P. P. Smith, Mr. H. Hubbard and Mr. J. Edwards. All the other pioneers have either died or left the city. The city of Green Bay was the target for the early settlers and Manitowoc was only mentioned because it lay on the old Indian trail which led from Chicago northward to Green Bay. Manitowoc Rapids was settled before Manitowoc although the first house was built at the latter place. Rapids was the county seat for quite a number of years and the postoffice and court house were situated there until the early 1850's.

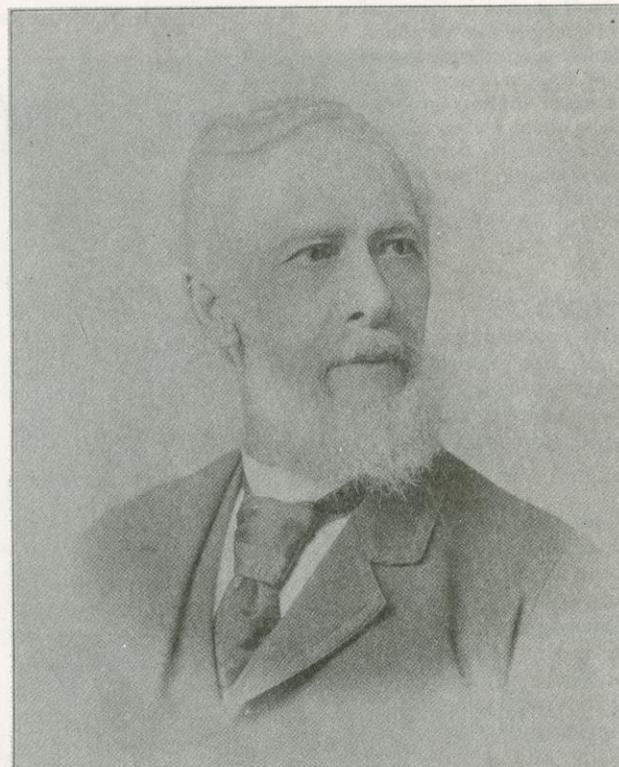
The origin of the name "Manitowoc" is not exactly known. Opinions differ on the subject and the name has been variously construed as meaning "The home of the Manitou," "the home of the good spirit" and "the devil's den." All however agree that the city received its name from a strange "spirit" which was frequently seen at the mouth of the river. The Indian name for "spirit" was "Manitou" and "woc" probably meant "home" or "abode." It is believed by some that Manitowoc is derived from the Indian word "Manitowag" or "spirit spawn," some pagan Indians imagining the spirits spawned like fish.

The region around Manitowoc was inhabited at various times by different tribes of Indians. John de St. Comes of the Government of Canada speaks of the west shore of Lake Michigan as being inhabited by Mascoutins, Menominees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Winnebagos, and Pottawatamies and these in turn claimed possession of Manitowoc until the treaty in Chicago in 1833. The Menominees were the acknowledged owners when the treaty took place in Green Bay in 1831 and the land in and around Manitowoc was ceded to the general government. The Chippewas and Menominees were the only tribes present when the first settlers made their appearance.

The earliest mention of Manitowoc is made by Col. Abraham Edwards who in 1818 made a voyage from Green Bay to Chicago by way of Sturgeon Bay. He describes the region of Manitowoc as being covered by dense tamarack forests and the shore lined with Indians many of whom were out on the



P.P. Smith



H.L. Hubbard

*The above photos are of two of the three men who are indebted to a great extent for the facts contained in this monograph.*

lake in canoes spearing white fish. The Indians usually retired to the interior of the country in summer but returned in autumn. The first settlers found the Indians supplied with rifles and axes and engaged in tapping maple trees for sugar making. With the decrease of game, the visits of the Indians became less frequent. Col. Ebenezer Childs made a trip to Green Bay from Chicago in 1825 in a Mackinaw boat. One of his men went on horseback to Manitowoc and from there on to Green Bay. When Childs arrived here, one of his men became ill and was unable to go on. He was left in Manitowoc with enough provisions and water to supply his needs until assistance could be sent from Green Bay. In the same year, Col. Wm. S. Hamilton, son of the renowned Alexander Hamilton, passed through Manitowoc with cattle for the garrison at Green Bay. Gen. Ellis tells that as early as 1822, the people travelled to Green Bay from Chicago and back again by an Indian trail which went through Manitowoc. Col. Childs passed through Manitowoc again in 1827 with 210 head of cattle for the garrison at Green Bay. In the spring of 1821, Dr. W. S. Madison from Green Bay had received leave of absence to go to Kentucky to visit his home. While a little in advance of his men at the present site of Manitowoc, he was shot from his horse by a Chippewa Indian lying in ambush. One of the soldiers who accompanied him went back to Green Bay for assistance but when he returned, the doctor was dead. They took him to Green Bay and buried him. The Indian, whose name was Ke-taukah, was delivered up by his tribe and was taken to Detroit for trial. He pleaded guilty and was executed the 27th of December, 1821. Dr. Madison was the first white man killed in Manitowoc.

The first settlers were attracted here by the fine lumber and Manitowoc was often pointed out as being a very desirable location for the erection of a prosperous town. The chief industry at first was lumbering and shingle-making. In 1826, Moses Swan and Isaac Haertel as companions in trade, made a voyage from Green Bay along the coast in a Mackinaw boat filled with goods and traded with the Indians at Manitowoc. They kept this up for seven years. In 1833, Daniel Le Roy, M. L. Martin and P. B. Grignon explored the country from Green Bay south to Milwaukee. In their narrative they speak of an Indian village at Manitowoc.

The United States land survey was completed in 1835 by A. G. Ellis, father of Judge Ellis, of Brown County. A land office had been established at Green Bay the year before. The first land entries in Manitowoc were made by Louis Fizette and Wm. Jones, the former on August 3rd, 1835, and the

latter on September 10th, of the same year. Francis Laframbois and Wm. Jourdain took the first land in Rapids on the 3rd and 6th of August, 1835. The entries were made at the land office in Green Bay. The years 1835-36 were noted for the fever of speculation which passed through the country. The land was bought from the government at \$1.25 an acre. Fizette sold his land to a man named Arndt, of Green Bay, and the latter disposed of it the same year at \$100 an acre. Town plats were laid out hundreds of miles from any human abode. Some of the early land owners in Manitowoc were Wm. Jones, Levi Beardsley, John McCarty, Ebenezer Hale, A. G. Ellis, John P. Arndt, Richard Allen and James B. Murray. These men sold their land in parcels but no records are in existence. The records, which were first made in Green Bay, were either lost or stolen. In 1837, the country contained within the boundary line of Manitowoc County, was set off and called Conroe. Manitowoc and Brown counties remained attached until 1848 when by a legislative enactment Manitowoc became a part of the Third judicial circuit.

Rumors of a railroad to be built through this section of the country to the Pacific, spurred men on and Sartoris made heavy purchases around Cato, while Jones bought up the land in Manitowoc. In 1850 there was much talk of building a railroad through Manitowoc. Work was started at once under the management of Mr. George Reed who was afterwards president of the Wisconsin Central. Trouble arose and the project was given up.

The land owned by Jones, Clark & Co. extended from the "Little Manitowoc," three miles south and west as far as the dividing line between Manitowoc and Rapids.

The first postoffice was established at Rapids in 1837 and Jacob Conroe was the first postmaster. Mail was received twice a week and was carried for two years between Sheboygan and Green Bay by Francis Flinn. The people in the neighborhood of Rapids had to go there to get their mail and some had to come 8 to 10 miles on horseback. When a letter was received, the person receiving it had to pay the postage which was 25 cents for every letter.

In the spring of 1836, Jones, Clark & Co., of Detroit, sent a gang of forty-five men to Manitowoc to clear a site for a house. They landed here the 1st of May from the schooner "Wisconsin" but in the evening of the same day, only five men remained, all the rest having deserted. Some of them followed the Indian trail up to Green Bay and the remainder followed the beach down to Sheboygan. Among the five who remained were Mark Howard, E. L.

Abbott and a man named Farnham. A site was cleared by these five men at the foot of the Sixth and Seventh Street on the north side of the river and there they built a shanty in which to live during the winter. Farnham and Howard returned to Chicago in July, 1837, but Abbott stayed in Manitowoc. Jones induced people to settle here by offering everyone a lot free if he would make his home here. Conroe and his family also came in 1836 and Mrs. Conroe was the first white woman in the county. In the spring of 1837, Oliver Hubbard, Moses Hubbard and D. S. Munger came and settled with their families. They were followed in July by Benjamin Jones and P. P. Smith, who was 15 years old at the time, and by about twenty-five or thirty workmen, the most of whom left before winter set in. One of the laborers sickened and died and was buried in the old cemetery, now a residence portion of the city. This was the first death from natural causes in the city. These first laborers received from \$30 to \$40 a month and carpenters received from \$2.75 to \$3.00 a day. Hiram McAllister was one of the first carpenters and was also the pioneer farmer of the county. In 1837 the town plat was laid out by order of William Jones, the work being done by a civil engineer named Waterbury. Streets were laid out and stakes driven to mark the division of lots. On account of the swamp on the south side of the river near the bank, Eighth Street was turned from its course and a person standing in the middle of Eighth Street on the north side, looking south, may readily see the deviation from a straight line. The population of Manitowoc County in 1837 was 180; Manitowoc had 60; Two Rivers and Rapids, each 40; and Thayer's Mill, now known as the "Murphy Mill," situated on the dividing line between Rapids and Cato, had 20.

Wm. Jones was the first judicial officer of the county and reports show that there were only marriage ceremonies and no criminal cases, certainly a good sign for a growing community. The city then extended north as far as Huron Street, west about as far as Fourteenth Street, south to Division Street, and east to the lake. The first laborers built a frame house in 1836 for Benjamin Jones at the northeast corner of York and Seventh Streets. The building is still standing in good condition. In 1837 a large warehouse 40 x 60 feet was built by Ben Jones, between Sixth and Seventh Street. Ben Jones had land in Chicago which he traded with his brother, William, for land in Manitowoc, where he made his home. His brother moved to Chicago and engaged in land speculation. Addie Jones was the first white child born in the county. She afterwards became the

wife of Dr. S. C. Blake, who until several years ago was a practicing physician in this city. In July, 1837, the first wedding, that of E. S. Abbott and Marie Smith, sister of P. P. Smith, took place in Manitowoc. After the marriage ceremony had been performed by Ben Jones, recently appointed justice of the peace, the happy couple started on their wedding journey to the Rapids where a celebration worthy of the occasion had been prepared.

The first brick was manufactured near the place where the Goodrich dock is at present. In the same year, 1837, Ben Jones began the building of the National Hotel which however was not completed until, several years later, four families from Sheboygan settled here. Conroe's mill was busy sawing lumber and employed quite a number of men. Jones made a bargain to buy up all the lumber sawed, at \$20 per M., delivered at the mouth of the river. The lumber was either floated down the river on scows or hauled with ox teams. Some of the lumber was used in the erection of the city of Manitowoc and some was shipped to Chicago. The schooner "Oregon" carried the first shipment at \$65 per M. The wood that was chopped down in clearing sites for buildings and gardens, was cut into steamboat wood and piled away. The next year the steamer "Pennsylvania," on her way from Green Bay to Chicago stopped outside of the harbor and took on some of the steamboat wood which had been chopped the year before. Wages for laboring men now were from \$10 to \$30 a month including board. By the fall of 1837 about 50 acres of land was under cultivation. All the settlers had their little gardens and raised their own vegetables. The soil in and around Manitowoc is a mixture of sand, clay and gravel. Oats and potatoes were the first things planted here and yielded well. P. P. Smith opened the first general store in a room of the warehouse owned by Ben Jones. The goods came from Chicago and often

the store did not have the goods which the people wanted and they had to wait until the next vessel came in and brought new goods. Manitowoc people had no fruit at that time, if we except the wild plums which grew in the vicinity. The first apples were brought from Chicago and bought by P. P. Smith at \$8 a barrel.

After the land had been laid out in lots in the city, the same land that had been bought the year before from the government at \$1.25 an acre now sold at \$100 a lot and sometimes more. One lot at the foot of Sixth and Seventh Streets sold at \$1,200.

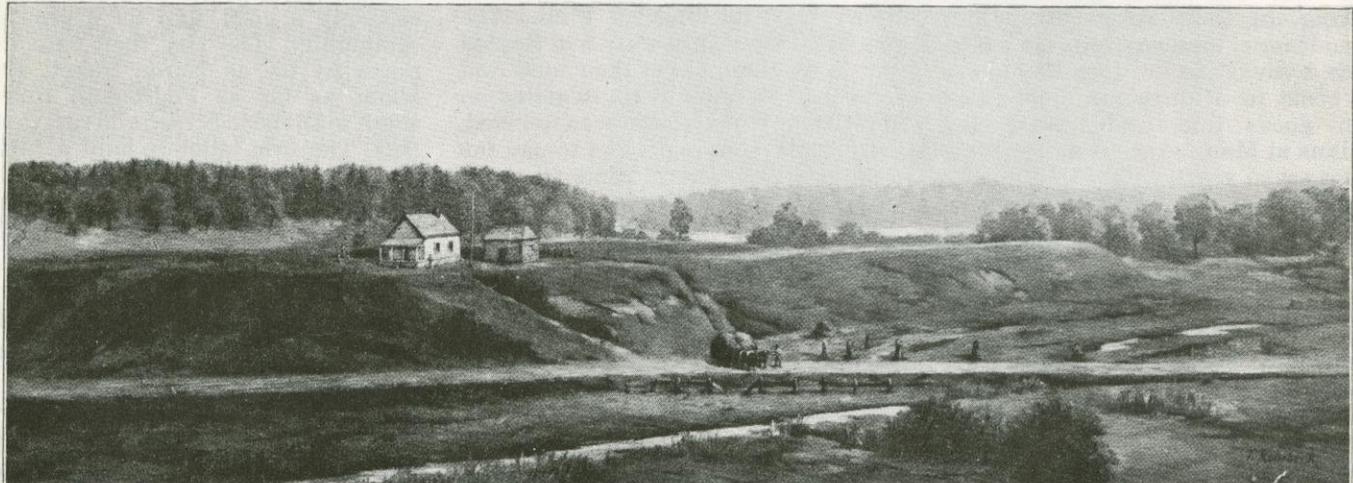
Joseph Edwards, father of Capt. Edwards, of this city, had perhaps the most interesting life of the early settlers. Planning to go to Chicago, he came from the east as far as Detroit where taking passage on a schooner going to Green Bay, he earned a passage for himself and family by sailing the boat. After working a while at Green Bay, he started out again reaching Manitowoc in 1836 and settled at the Rapids but soon he moved to Manitowoc. He was a very practical man and could work at almost any trade. Conroe, of Rapids, wanted some scows built for hauling his lumber down to Manitowoc and Mr. Edwards contracted for building them. Without nails or many of the tools required nowadays, he built scows that lasted a great number of years. He then went to Chicago but being disgusted with the place, he returned to Manitowoc and located permanently. He and his son spent the greater part of their time on the lakes.

In 1837 a sudden stop was put to all the speculation and building which had been going on during the last few years. Most of the people left and the population of the county was reduced from 180 to 60. The families of D. S. Munger, Ben Jones, Oliver Hubbard and Joseph Edwards were the only ones that stayed in Manitowoc. P. Johnston was the only man left in Kewaunee and he nearly starved to

death before being rescued by P. P. Smith and the rest of the men of Manitowoc who went up with a six-oared Mackinaw boat and moved Mr. and Mrs. Johnston and their daughter down to Manitowoc with all their household goods. This was during the winter when the weather was very cold and the lake stormy. Land became almost valueless. Lots which just a little while before sold at \$100 apiece and more, now could not be sold at their original price of \$1.25 an acre. All the sawmills in the county except Conroe's shut down and the workmen having no employment, left the county. The old "Murphy Mill," then owned by a man named Thayer, went bankrupt and was absorbed by Conroe. The lumber which had been shipped to Manitowoc at \$20 per M. could not be sold at \$7 per M. People had not as yet engaged in farming to any extent and the laboring men who had only come here to find employment in the sawmills, lived in poorly constructed shanties and so did not lose much by going away. It was a time that sifted out the hardy pioneers who had "grit" enough to stay and meet the emergency face to face.

Peter Johnston opened a saloon in one room of the National Hotel owned by Ben Jones and whiskey, rum, brandy and gin were all sold out of the same bottle. Three rooms were all that were needed for the accommodation of guests, who, like angel visits, were few and far between. The hardy pioneers who remained in Manitowoc were not disheartened but kept right on with the work of clearing and building up the town. The land agents who had sold the lots to the people at \$100 apiece the year before, had guaranteed that they would double in value but now they were worthless. The people who stayed here during and after the panic did not waste any time moaning over bad times but kept on clearing land and cutting shingles which, a few years later, they disposed of at good prices.

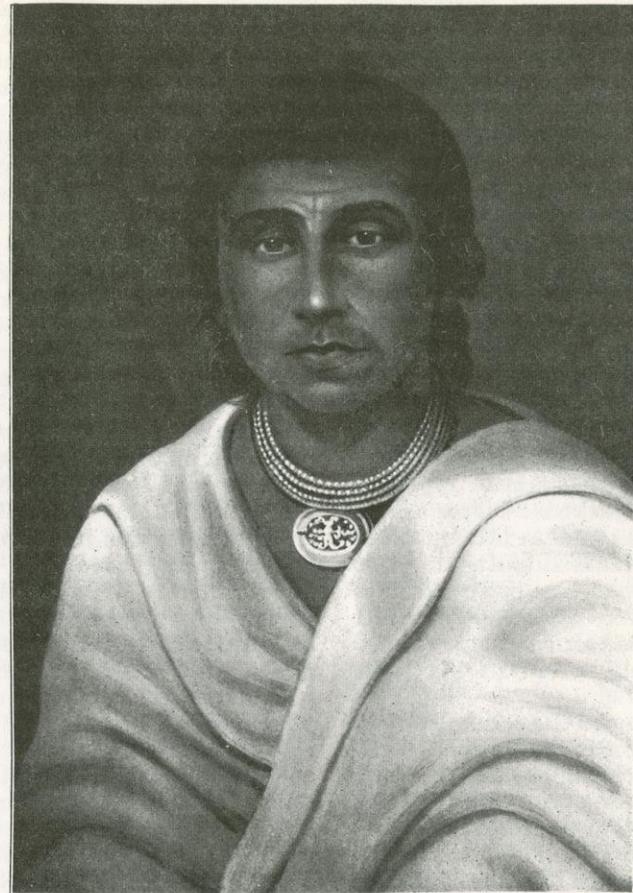
In 1838 Ben Jones sowed 5 acres of



First County Courthouse at Manitowoc Rapids and County House Hill — looking north.

wheat on the south end of Main Street, and realized a good crop. The grain was threshed with a flail and was taken with an ox team to Depere by P. P. Smith in four days. Hiram McAllister was the first man who engaged in farming to any extent, and gained the distinction of being the "pioneer farmer of Manitowoc County."

The early settlers were not troubled much by the Indians. Just as soon as the white people made their appearance, the Indians left their plantations in and around Manitowoc, but some of their corn plots were kept under cultivation by them in Cato until almost 1850. The Chippewas were the only tribe around this part of the country when the people began to settle. Their chief was a big athletic Indian named "Mexico." He was very friendly to the whites and when they first arrived he gave them wild cranberries and venison in exchange for pork. "Old Mexico" was in possession of a silver medal which was claimed to have come from George III, and this he valued higher than his life. Whenever he was in difficulties he came to Manitowoc and pawned it for provisions and then as soon as possible, he redeemed it. The medal was good for anything with the people in Manitowoc and "Old Mexico" always received what he wanted when he came around with his medal. About a year later there was an Indian scare and rumors were circulated that the Chippewas intended to attack the settlers in the county and extinguish them. Pat Thibault and E. L. Abbott were sent to "Old Mexico" to find out whether there was any truth in the report. The old chief drew from them the object of their mission and assured them that neither he nor any of his tribe had any such intentions and he felt greatly offended at the suspicions of the white people. The Indians remained in Two Rivers until almost 1860. Their chief occupation there was catching fish and cooking them for their oil which they brought to Manitowoc and Milwaukee to sell or to exchange for ammunition and provisions. When going out with their oil, about twenty-five or thirty canoes would be rowed along in a line and the odor of the oil was enough to chase the rural inhabitants into the backwoods. The Indian received aid from the government until about 1850 but after this the allowance was discontinued and they left this part of the country. When the season of the year drew near for them to go for their government aid, they would come to Manitowoc and putting up their camps waited until all had arrived and then embarked in their wooden and birch-bark canoes and rowed away. They did not go far out on the lake but kept close to the land so that when a storm came up,



*Chief Waumegesako or Mexico  
Born 1789. Died at Rapids 1844*

they could drag their canoes ashore and wait until it was over and then continue their journey to Detroit where they received their money. An old pioneer describes their last migration as follows: About three or four weeks before it was time for the Indians to get their government aid, squads of Indians arrived here and hung around the city. The last time I saw them there must have been 500 or more including men, women and children. When they embarked and the canoes left the harbor, it looked as if a flock of geese or ducks were swimming away. After this last trip they did not return to Manitowoc and were seen and heard of no more. Their chief, "Old Mexico," who had died several years before, was buried on one of the hills near the Village of Rapids. The usual Indian ceremonies were performed at his death and funeral. The Indians had obtained "fire water" and celebrated for about two weeks before they left the place. Two sons of "Mexico" are at present on a reservation near Antigo.

The first election of the county was held in 1839 at the Rapids. The two parties in the field were the Jones party, of Manitowoc, and the Conroe party, of Rapids. The total number of votes cast was 50, and out of these the Conroe party received 33, and was elected. The polls for the election were opened at Conroe's mill. P. Johnston and J. F. Este were clerks of the

election and Oliver Hubbard, Hiram McAllister and H. Conroe were judges. The election returns were carried to Green Bay by Oliver Hubbard. The first election provided for the election of a sheriff and that sessions should be held in the school house at the county seat. It was declared lawful for the county officers to have their offices at their homes. O. C. Hubbard was elected assessor and J. W. Conroe register of deeds. At the next election, Ben Jones and J. E. Edwards were elected county commissioners. At the next session of the county board, the county was divided into three assessment districts and J. S. Chase, O. C. Hubbard and E. S. Abbott were appointed assessors. In 1841, Ben Jones was appointed poormaster of the county and in 1844 Oliver Clawson and E. S. Abbott were appointed school commissioners. Manitowoc and Rapids were set off as separate towns in 1839 and three commissioners were appointed to mark out a road from the mouth of Manitowoc River to the Rapids. An allowance of \$250 was made to be expended on this road. A tax of 5 mills on the dollar was levied on all taxable property, the value of which was \$210,000 and the tax levied was \$1,050. In 1840 and 1841, the tax was reduced from 5 mills to 3 mills on the dollar but the value of the taxable property had increased to \$270,000. After the panic in 1837, immigration to Manitowoc

practically ceased until 1845-46. In 1846 the population of the county was only 629 but in 1850 it had increased to 3,702. In 1840 the population of the county was 240 and in 1842 it was 263, showing how slowly settling went on till 1846.

In the winter of 1838-39 the Green Bay Road was cut through in this county but was not bridged nor graded. As late as 1848, the people had to ford streams.

The first lighthouse was built in 1839 at the corner of York and Fifth Streets. The brick used in its construction, were made at the foot of Chicago Street where the gas factory now stands and were hauled to the places needed by P. P. Smith with an ox team. P. Johnston was the first lighthouse keeper at this port. A pier was built, a little north of the pier on the north side of the river, so that vessels could come up alongside to unload and take on lumber for the return trip. The pier was soon washed away and only a few of the posts remain standing.

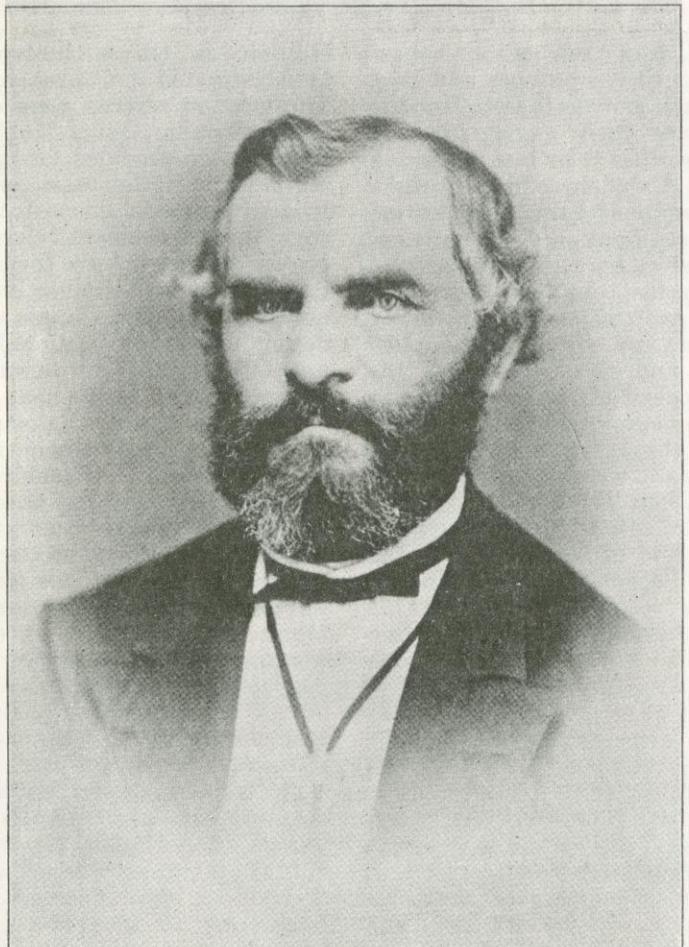
P. Glover opened the second store in the city in a room of the National Hotel owned by Ben Jones. The first and only factory of any kind prior to 1850, was a sawmill erected at the side of the river near Eighth Street. The first bridge was constructed in 1850 and spanned

the river at the place where Eighth Street bridge is now. Before this, whenever the people wished to cross the river, they had to take a boat. This first bridge was a small affair and was built for the use of pedestrians. Not until quite a number of years later was a bridge built for general traffic. Horses were hardly ever seen, oxen being the only beasts kept for pulling.

The first school house was built in 1839 on the present school site. The building was small and stood facing Sixth Street. The first year there were twelve pupils in attendance of whom P. P. Smith was the oldest. The school was taught by S. M. Peak and the expenses incurred were borne by the parents who had children in school. The building was moved about from place to place and just recently it was moved up the river on a scow to be converted into a Jewish Synagogue. This was by no means the first school, for private schools had been kept from almost the first year and private instruction given at the homes of the pupils. No churches were built until 1850 when the Episcopal church, now occupied by the Irish Catholics, was built. Services before this time had been held in private houses. Even when there was no minister present, the people would come together on

Sundays to listen to one of their number read aloud from the Bible and to join in the singing of hymns. They always spend Sunday in a religious way and to this day Manitowoc is noted for the religious character of its people. Occasionally an itinerant preacher came here to hold services. The first one to hold services was a Methodist minister named Lewis who travelling from place to place, held services at Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Green Bay and other little settlements along the way. News travelled slowly and came irregularly. Boats only landed occasionally and mail was sometimes delayed for a long time. People from Manitowoc had to go to Rapids for their mail until 1849 at which time the postoffice was removed to Manitowoc. Very little mail came in and the postmaster did not have much to do. The people always longed for the arrival of boats that they might have tidings of friends or relatives in the east. In 1850 Charles W. Fitch came here and edited the first newspaper, "The Manitowoc Weekly Herald."

Most of the early settlers were from the east, very few came from Sheboygan, Green Bay or any of the other places in Wisconsin. Most of the men who came here were looking for employment and when there was little or no work they went on to other places. The people who came after 1846 came to clear up the land to establish homes and engage in farming. There is no such thing as failure for that class of people. Until 1850, or later, the people in Manitowoc depended upon outside sources for food. They did not have the comforts that they have now. Their homes were rude structures put up in a hurry and were lacking the conveniences found in the homes of today. Butcher shops were non-existent and fresh meat was hardly ever seen. Although some food was raised, it was not sufficient to feed the people and the pioneers were forced to depend upon the outside world for their provisions. Very few people lived in this county between 1837 and 1846 and clearing went on slowly. After these years, as the population grew more rapidly, more food was required and although they soon cleared quite a little land, it was several years before they could raise grain enough to supply themselves and their cattle. There were great difficulties to be overcome in taking the grain to the mill; roads were poor; ox teams slow and the nearest mill at Depere, 40 miles away. No gristmill was established in Manitowoc until several years after 1850. The price of flour was usually very low considering the times, but the market at times was subject to great fluctuations. The price of pork ranged all the way between \$10 and \$40 a barrel. The people always put in a large stock of provisions when they had a



*Fred Borcherdt*

*First German Settler of Manitowoc County, 1841. Consul at Leghorn, Italy.*

chance for boats did not make regular trips and people might have starved while waiting for them. There were two stores in town after 1840 but people could not depend on them for their household goods for the stores were just as apt to be out of goods as the people were. The principal articles of subsistence were potatoes and fish.

Land agents at this time, one of whom was Gustav Richter, wrote up pamphlets in which they described the land they had for sale and recommended Manitowoc and Sheboygan counties for people to settle who intended to engage in farming. Some of these pamphlets found their way into Germany and in 1847 many Germans came from the Rhine Provinces and Saxony to settle in Manitowoc County, some of them coming to the City of Manitowoc. Two Rivers was growing too at this time and was being built rapidly. The first people went there to establish fishing stations and these have been kept up ever since. In the fall of 1847 another immigration from Germany took place and many Mecklenburgers and Hannoverians under one Frederick Reineking settled in Newton, Centerville and Manitowoc. The Rhenish Prussians were among the earliest settlers. Chas. Esslinger, land agent for the land in and around Manitowoc, was elected to fill the position of first president of the Village of Manitowoc. Frederick Borchardt did much to get the city and county settled. He went east and induced people to come to Manitowoc to settle by telling them of its great advantages; its fine harbor, excellent soil and first class lumber.

In 1847 Captain Joseph Edwards constructed the first vessel built at this port. It was built at the bottom of the hill by the river a little northwest of where the water tower now stands. The staunch little craft of 60 tons burden or as an old settler expresses it, "capable of holding 150,000 feet of lumber above water," was christened the "Citizen." The lumber for her construction was sawed in Conroe's mill at Rapids and the spikes, nails, anchor and ropes were brought from Chicago. The entire cost of her construction was \$3,000. The building of this schooner was the beginning of an industry which in later years made Manitowoc famous and gave it the name of "Clipper City." The "Citizen" owned by her builder, was sailed by him for several years. About ten years after her construction she was lost on the east shore of Lake Michigan during a gale. At the time of her loss she was owned by parties in Chicago. This was the first and only vessel that was built at this place prior to 1850.

One interesting feature of these early inhabitants was their ingenious way of extinguishing fires. The men were all trained and knew exactly what to do. They formed a line from the river to the burning building and passed pails full of water from the river up the line while at the same time the empty pails were passed down the same line. All the buildings then in existence, were near the river. The pioneers say that these fire brigades were very successful and that they had pails made especially for fire purposes. In 1838 a man named Spink built a large two story house which burned down the next year and this was probably the cause of the

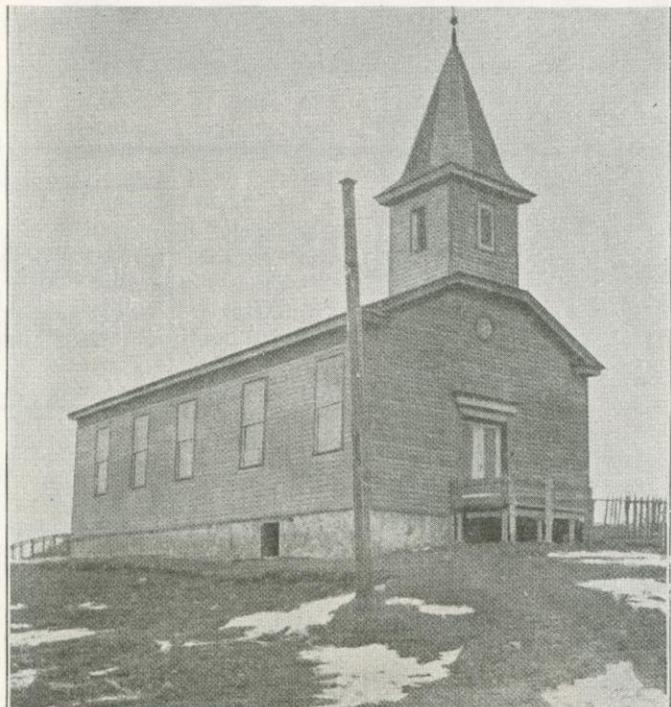
organization.

Game was plentiful; wild ducks and pigeons could be had at almost any time. The river was sometimes covered with the ducks and the sun was sometimes almost obscured by the flocks of wild pigeons which flew over the city. The river was full of fish which could be caught at almost any time. Fishing and hunting formed the chief amusements. In 1838, J. P. Clark, of Detroit, came on the schooner "Gazette" bringing with him twenty men and all his fishing apparatus. He built several fishing shanties at a point a little south of the mouth of the river. The lake was full of fish, and fishing proved to be a paying industry. As many as 150 barrels of fish were sometimes caught at one haul, packed and sent to the market at Chicago and Detroit. Clark stayed here and engaged in fishing for fifteen years.

In 1845, George Dusold came to Manitowoc and opened the first general shoe store and repair shop. Before this time the people had to order their shoes and have them shipped here by boat. The people who came to settle, usually brought enough shoes along to last them for several years. They did their own repairing until the arrival of Dusold. After the removal of the postoffice from Rapids to Manitowoc in 1849, G. Malmrose was the first postmaster.

Some of the private teachers here, before the first school house was built, were Mrs. Lydia Lenniville, Mr. Edward Beardsley and Miss E. Champlin. Miss Champlin came to Manitowoc with her brother's family in the fall of 1843, and taught school the following winter, in a little building on York between Fifth and Sixth Streets. Mrs. Lenniville was teacher for Miss Esther A. Champlin now Mrs. P. P. Smith. Mr. Champlin came here in 1843 and was followed a little later by his family and sister. They came to Manitowoc from Buffalo on the steamer "Independence" which made the trip in two weeks. Mr. Champlin who came here to engage in the lumber business, started a mill at the Rapids and employed about fifteen men. Mr. Heath, a partner of Mr. Champlin in the lumber business, came here in the same boat with the Champlin family but died the next year and was buried at the Rapids.

In 1846 the Platt family came and some time after Mr. Platt started a general store. The Windiate family also came that year. Two Bleser brothers came and settled at Rapids. A few years later Mr. Schuette opened a store at the same place where Schuette Bros. now carry on their business. Mr. Baensch, father of Judge E. Baensch also started a store in a little block house on the south side. About the only things to be obtained at these stores at first was soap, candles and calico.



Catholic Church at Manitowoc Rapids. Built in 1852 — Oldest Church in County.

Candles were the only things used for light, as kerosene was not to be obtained until several years later.

The window glass that was used came from a glass factory in Lake Dunmore, Vermont. This was the only glass factory in existence in the United States at that time and the factory in which the sand was ground, was owned by Mrs. Smith's father. Christian Andrewson, the first Norwegian in the city, in company with P. P. Smith started the first tailor shop in a room of the Smith store and kept it up for seven years. Anderson was lighthouse keeper at the same time. The store was remodelled later and is now used by the Smalley Company for an office. Mr. O.

Torrison, father of the Torrison brothers, came in the 40's and at first worked in Smith's store which he bought later on. He then built a store at the corner of Eighth and Commercial Streets on the place where Liebenow's jewelry store now stands. He was a very hard working man and soon worked himself up to prominence and wealth.

In 1849 quite a number of Manitowoc people died from the cholera scourge and were buried in the old cemetery on the place where the old "Morse house" now stands and some graves can still be found in the back of Mr. Tillson's house. The first regular doctor in Manitowoc was Dr. A. W. Preston, who came here in 1847. Two years later Dr.

Blake came. When the people came to Manitowoc in the 40's and landed at the mouth of the river they had to crawl up the sandy beach where instead of the expected town, they saw a desolate spot covered with stumps and old rotten logs which were perhaps the remains of a noble forest that had been blown down in a great storm which must have swept over this part of the country many years before. After 1850 settling went on rapidly and the reader, by comparing this history of Manitowoc with the Manitowoc of today, will readily see what wonderful changes have taken place in the short space of fifty years.



*Manitowoc in 1859.*

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## MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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