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## **Wisconsin's Belgian community : an account of the early events in the Belgian settlement in northeastern Wisconsin with particular reference to the Belgians in Door County. 1933**

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Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin: Door County Historical Society, 1933

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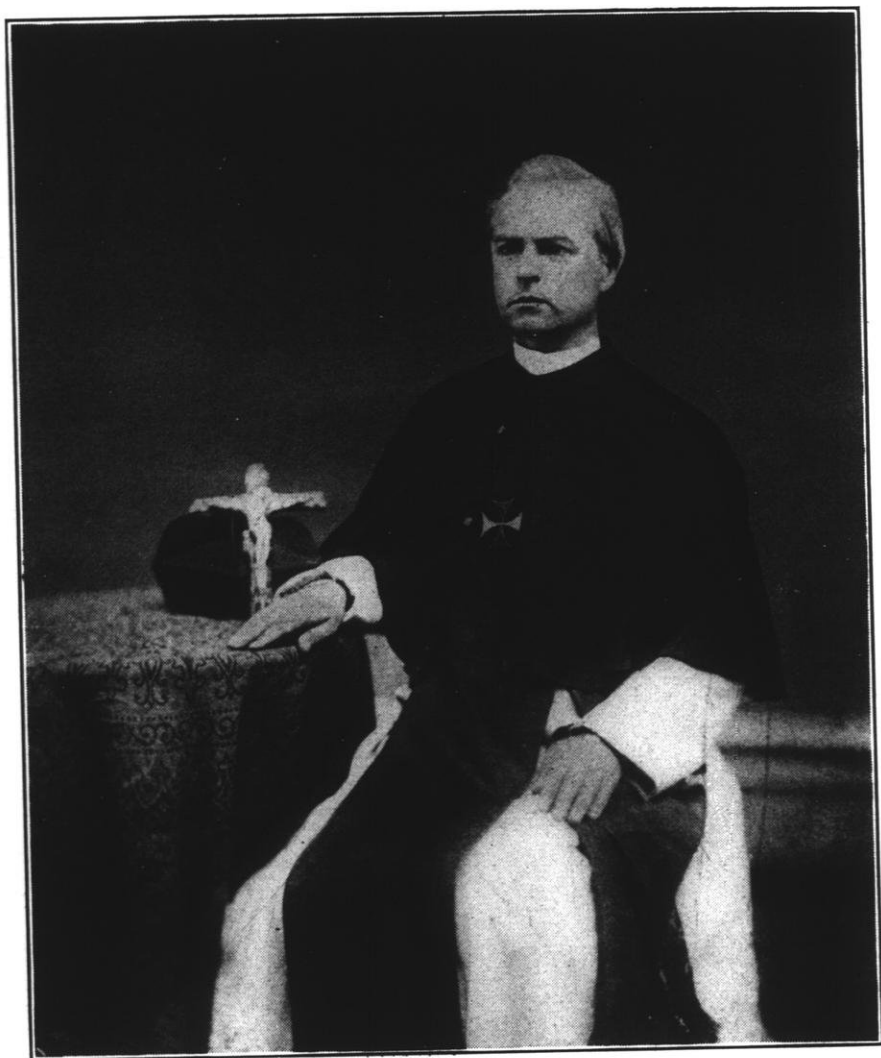
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**WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN  
COMMUNITY**

**(PENINSULA HISTORICAL REVIEW, VOL. VII, 1933)**



**REV. F. E. DAEMS**  
THE FOUNDER OF THE BELGIAN SETTLEMENT



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# WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

AN ACCOUNT OF THE EARLY EVENTS IN  
THE BELGIAN SETTLEMENT IN NORTH-  
EASTERN WISCONSIN WITH PARTICULAR  
REFERENCE TO THE BELGIANS IN DOOR  
COUNTY.

By  
HJALMAR RUED HOLAND



DOOR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.  
1933

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## PREFACE

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The first attempt to preserve the memory of the early Belgian pioneers in Wisconsin was made in 1881 by Chas. I. Martin. He was editor of the Sturgeon Bay *Expositor* and conceived the excellent idea of increasing the circulation of his newspaper by compiling and publishing short biographical notices of all the old settlers in the county. This was a big undertaking, but Mr. Martin carried it through quite thoroughly. He later published this biographical material with other historical data under the title *History of Door County*. Unfortunately, the haste with which this worthy work was done leaves much to be desired with reference to the correctness of the names and dates recorded. Nevertheless it was a praiseworthy endeavor, and the present writer has been much helped by Mr. Martin's early records. Mr. Martin made no attempt to write any historical survey of the immigration of the Belgians.

The next writer who added to our knowledge of the Belgian pioneers was also named Martin. The *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XIII (1895) contains an article entitled *The Belgians of Northeast Wisconsin* by Xavier Martin. Mr. Martin came from Belgium as a youth in 1853. He was an intelligent man who acquired a good education in this country. Later he saw the transformation of the great wilderness northeast of Green Bay, where fifteen thousand Belgians settled, into a prosperous farming dis-

## WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

trict. He therefore had the best opportunity of writing a comprehensive account of this great migration of his countrymen. However, while his sketch is valuable, it falls far short of what might be expected in the circumstances. He mentions only ten pioneers, and none of these are from Door County. Comparatively little is told of the early struggles, and too much space is devoted to the so-called successful Belgians in the more recent years.

In 1917 the undersigned compiled a *History of Door County* of 450 pages in which he has a chapter on the Belgian Settlement in Union, Brussels and Gardner townships. As the book attempted to cover the whole county, the treatment of the Belgian Settlement was necessarily very brief.

These three modest contributions, covering all together about thirty-five printed pages, are all that have been made to tell the story of one of the largest single groups of foreign settlers in Wisconsin. It is an unusually interesting group, being the only Belgian settlement of importance in the Northwest, remarkably compact, and preserving more of the mother country's speech, customs and characteristics than almost any settlement of foreign origin that may be mentioned.

With a view to preserve a more complete record of this extensive community, the Door County Historical Society undertook to compile as complete a record as possible of that part of the settlement which lies in Door County. The settlement is now almost eighty years old and much valuable material is irretrievably lost. The following account, which is the fruit of this endeavor, is therefore presented with a keen realization of its deficiencies. Fortunately there are still a half dozen old pioneers left who came here among the first in their early boyhood, and the writer is

## PREFACE

deeply grateful to them for the ready assistance received.

The writer's thanks are also due to Mr. Lee W. Metzner for his kind permission to reprint his excellent account of *The First Kirmess*, and to Mr. W. J. Gilson and Rev. M. J. Vanden Elsen who have carefully read this sketch in manuscript and made many valuable suggestions.

HJALMAR RUED HOLAND

Ephraim, Wis., July 15, 1933



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## THE FIRST BELGIAN PIONEERS

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BETWEEN Green Bay and Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, is a large tract of beautiful farming country—about a dozen contiguous townships in all—which is populated almost exclusively by people of Belgian origin. It is by far the largest rural settlement of people of this nationality in America. Three generations of people have lived and toiled here since this land was reclaimed from the wilderness, but there are still a few old men and women, now approaching a hundred years in age, who remember how this region appeared when they and their parents penetrated into the vast primeval forest that covered it eighty years ago. It is principally from these survivors of the first pioneers that this brief record of their early experiences has been gathered.

The first Belgian known to have visited Wisconsin was Father Louis Hennepin who was born in Ath in the province of Hainault. He came to America in 1675 and took a prominent part in exploring the West. In 1679 he became one of the chaplains in Robert LaSalle's expedition to explore the Mississippi river. He was the first man to describe Niagara Falls near which point LaSalle built his vessel, the *Griffin*. With the rest of the party he sailed on this first vessel to ply the uncharted waters of the Great Lakes to Washington Island, their destination, at the north end of the Door County peninsula. From this point the *Griffin* started back

on its homeward journey, never to be heard from again. With it was lost a fortune in furs which had been obtained from the Indians to defray the expenses of the expedition.

Meanwhile Hennepin with about twenty other men traveled in birch-bark canoes to the south end of Lake Michigan. It was the season of fall storms, and a whole month was spent in traveling the length of Door County.

Eventually the party reached the lower reaches of the Illinois river, and from here Hennepin with two other men were sent to explore the upper Mississippi river which had been discovered only seven years previously. They were the first white men known to have reached St. Anthony Falls, named by Hennepin, now in the heart of Minneapolis. On his way back he traveled by way of the Wisconsin river and the Fox river, stopping for a brief rest at the Jesuit mission on the site of the present city of DePere. As he traveled by canoe, the first day's journey from there would bring him approximately to the site of the present village of Dyckesville, the first favorable camping place he would come to, toward the end of the day's journey. He therefore probably camped here, little dreaming that his campsite was later to become the center of the largest settlement of his countrymen in America.

But that was long ago, and very few if any Belgians followed him for almost two hundred years. Eventually a few venturesome souls from the seaports found their way to the new world, but they wrote but few letters home, and their example was not followed by many. It is not known that any Belgians from the farming districts emigrated to America until 1853.

In the early part of that year a farmer by the name of Francois Petinot from the commune of Grez Doiceau in

the province of Brabant in central Belgium made a business trip to Antwerp. In a tavern of that city he found a pamphlet, describing America, written in the Dutch language, presumably by a Dutch emigrant in one of the western states. This pamphlet was to have great influence in shaping the lives and fortunes of thousands of his countrymen. Petiniot was able to read a little Dutch and became greatly interested in reading the descriptions in this pamphlet of fertile land stretching for hundreds of miles and now lying vacant awaiting the settlement of white man. And when he read that this land could be purchased from the American government for only \$1.25 per acre — a mere bagatelle when compared with the high price of land in crowded Belgium — he felt that here indeed was opportunity knocking at the door. His farm in Belgium comprised only four or five acres, but in America he could get a hundred times as much land for what his few acres would bring! This was something to talk about and look forward to. Soon the whole commune was busy discussing the advisability and possibility of emigrating. But here arose the great question: Was the information in the pamphlet reliable, or was it a snare set to catch the foolish and credulous?

Eventually nine other men, small farmers like Petiniot, decided to sell what they had and take a chance on fortune's gift in western America. The names of these ten venture-some pathfinders are as follows: Francois Petiniot, Jean Martin, Philip Hannon, Joseph Moreau, Etienne Detienne, Adrian Masy, Lambert Bodart, Joseph Jossart, Martin Paque and Jean Baptiste Detienne.

Their small farms and personal property were quickly sold, and with the proceeds in their pockets they went to the nearest agent to learn when they could get a ship and the

cost of the passage. They found that a three-masted schooner, *The Quennebec*, was to sail from Antwerp to New York about the middle of May. The tickets would cost about \$35.00 for each person above twelve years of age, and they were required to bring their bedding and provisions for at least six weeks.

Then followed a busy time of baking, sewing and packing. Finally, about a week before the time of departure of the vessel, the little party said goodbye to their neighbors with many tears, for a journey to America was then considered a separation for life. On May 18th, 1853, *The Quennebec* hoisted her sails.

Arrived on shipboard, they found that copies of their much thumbed pamphlet had found its way into other parts of Belgium and Holland, for there were more than a hundred emigrants on board, many of whom, like themselves, had been persuaded by it to emigrate to the land beyond the sea. The voyage was a hard one, and to the Belgians from the interior, unused to the sea, it was a succession of frightful storms. Once they thought their last hour had come, for the big main mast snapped off and was carried away. But the old ship tossed and swayed and creaked onward over the endless seas for seven weeks. During the last week there was much suffering because the passengers ran out of food and the drinking water was insufficient.

The ten Belgian families had no particular destination in mind when they left home, but on the ocean voyage they decided to accompany the Hollanders to Wisconsin—wherever that was. After an interminable journey on canal boats and lake steamers they eventually reached Milwaukee, full of wonder that the world was so unimaginably big. The Hollanders were going to Sheboygan, near which they had

friends, and the Belgians accompanied them thither. Here there was but little good land left, and the Belgians moreover found to their dismay that they were in the midst of people with whom they were unable to talk. In this dilemma they finally met with a French-Canadian who told them that in Green Bay nearly half the population was French. Furthermore, he assured them that the soil, timber, water and climate was just as good as around Sheboygan. Greatly cheered by this they took passage on a lake steamer which carried them to Green Bay. This was almost like coming home, for in Green Bay the French tongue was not strange.

Leaving their families in Green Bay, the men now went out prospecting for desirable land. After some days of investigation, they finally determined to settle in the vicinity of what is now the city of Kaukauna, twenty miles southwest of Green Bay. They entered the lands which they selected in the government land office in Menasha, and well satisfied with their prospects they returned to Green Bay to fetch their families and baggage.

But here an event happened which made a great change in their plans. When they returned they found that a little sickly child of Phillip Hannon had died the day before, and preparations for its burial were necessary. This delayed the departure of the settlers for a few days and was the means of determining the location of the settlement of about 20,000 Belgians who are now living in Brown, Kewaunee and Door Counties.<sup>1</sup> On the day of the funeral the officiating priest was visited by his friend, Father Edward Daems, the pastor of the last frontier settlement in northeastern

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<sup>1</sup> See Xavier Martin's *Belgians of Northeastern Wisconsin* in *Wis. Hist. Colls.* XIII, page 376.

Wisconsin, known as the Bay Settlement, some ten miles northeast of Green Bay. Father Daems was also a Belgian and was much interested in meeting his countrymen. He was an energetic, friendly young man, full of enthusiasm for his work and for his new country. To the homesick immigrants it was like meeting a long lost brother. They told him of their decision to settle twenty miles south of Green Bay, but to this he would not listen. At Bay Settlement in the opposite direction was his parish. They must see that first for there were many French-speaking people, and the soil was unsurpassed. He would go with them and find them good places to settle, where they could assist at mass and partake of the sacraments, and attend divine worship in their own language.

This last prospect was so inviting, especially to the women, that they decided to go with Father Daems and see the land in his neighborhood. The priest set out ahead with his horse and buckboard, while the immigrants, more slowly, followed along the winding wood-road on foot. The day after they reached Bay Settlement they started off again with Father Daems and another guide to look for land. Eventually, some ten miles northeast of Bay Settlement and many miles beyond the last log cabin, they selected lands in the vicinity of what is now known as Robinsonville, four miles south of Dyckesville. This settlement was afterward known as *Aux Premiers Belges*.

The courage and self-reliance of these first Belgian settlers is remarkable. The place they had selected for their homes lay many miles back in a deep, primeval forest, where not a ray of sunlight filtered through. They saw more Indians than white people, and for a while feared for the safety of their scalps. But the Indians were friendly,

and although the two peoples were unable to talk with each other, they assured each other by smiles and gesture that they had the kindest feeling toward each other. The winter was mild and the hunting was excellent. Toward spring the Indians initiated the pioneers into the mystery of tapping maple trees and making maple sugar to the great delight of the children. By this time the pioneers had cleared a number of acres and were looking around for oxen with which to plow among the stumps. With good health and sufficient funds to buy the necessities of life these first Belgians were well content in their new homes.

There is a tendency, characteristic of numbers of the earliest emigrational ventures, to describe the conditions in their new homes in golden colors. This is no doubt chiefly due to the fact that such first pathfinders usually are exceptionally hardy individuals whose energy, optimism and self-reliance make them look upon the hardships of a new country as a pleasant sport. Their glowing letters are perhaps also due to a desire to justify their judgment among the home people, for many of the latter had shaken their heads disapprovingly when the first pioneers had left the old neighborhood.

This triumphant spirit of boastfulness also characterized the letters of the first settlers in *Aux Premiers Belges*. Here, they said, one needed not money nor influence to get on in the world. A kind nature and a liberal government had provided all that was necessary. The soil was marvelously productive, the game was abundant, the climate was excellent,—all one needed to get rich was two willing hands.

To their friends in Belgium unacquainted with the life in the wilderness these letters opened up dazzling prospects.

The letters were passed from hand to hand and read by hundreds, for emigration to America was still such a new idea in Belgium that it seemed a wonderful thing to hear of it. Many of those who were able departed at once for the new country full of pleasant anticipations. In the fall of 1854 every little loghouse in *Aux Premiers Belges* was crowded with new arrivals. Here they were joyfully received, for it was a great pleasure to be united again with their relatives and friends after this long separation.

But alas! These new arrivals brought with them the germs of the deadly Asiatic cholera, and soon the little forest cabins were filled with tears and terror. One after another of these new immigrants died, and many also among their hospitable hosts. It was a sudden and almost unconquerable disease. Strong men, apparently well at night, would be found dead in the morning; the skin on their faces turned almost black and their eyes sunk far back in the sockets. Father Daems' woodland parish had by this time extended so far into districts yet inaccessible to wheeled traffic, that he could attend to only a few of the burials. Most of the victims, attended only by the nearest relatives, were therefore buried back in the woods, usually without coffins and without the rites of the church or the sustaining presence of the priest.



## THE BELGIAN PIONEERS OF DOOR COUNTY

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THE news of this pestilence did not reach Belgium for some time, and meanwhile thousands of other people were preparing to emigrate. Most of them were small cotters living on the estate of big landowners, and, being in very humble circumstances, they were not able to depart so quickly. They made their living chiefly by working in the harvest fields and by thrashing the grain. For cutting, binding and hauling in the grain of the landlord they got every twentieth shock. Later they spent their time all fall and half the winter in thrashing by hand with a flail. For this they also received every twentieth bushel. Thus, for working the greater part of the year, they received one-tenth of the crop which was not much. To this was added a few cents per day for time spent in plowing or doing other work. How alluring then was this prospect of becoming independent farm owners and keeping the whole crop for themselves! To get a share in these riches across the sea became the dominant desire of all who heard these wonderful letters read.

But to most of these laborers with their wretched little incomes it was a most difficult undertaking to save enough money to buy tickets for the family and also lay aside a little surplus on which to live until they could earn a living in the new world. Many of them found it quite impossible,

and with deep dejection resigned themselves to a life of drudgery with the flail. The others proceeded with a system of pinching and saving, watched over with the most relentless frugality. In the meantime came rumors of the cholera ravages among their friends in America. This discouraged many—but then sickness and pestilence appear in every country, and the fragmentary news was now a year old. The more determined therefore continued their preparations. By the spring of 1856, most of them were ready to sail, and thousands of Belgians from the province of Brabant departed to start a new life in the Wisconsin backwoods.

For many of the emigrants of 1856 this venture proved most disastrous. It was a very stormy spring and one vessel with several hundred emigrants was wrecked at sea and all perished. Dysentery broke out on another vessel, the *David Otley*, and sixty emigrants out of a total of two hundred died on the voyage. A third vessel, the *Lacedemon*, stormbeaten and crippled, drifted helplessly about for many days until it was able to return to Flushing. Here the emigrants were obliged to spend their meagre funds for provisions, so that many were penniless when they landed in America. They eventually reached Wisconsin. Here they took up the larger part of the remaining vacant lands in the northeastern part of Brown County; spread over several neighboring townships in Kewaunee County; and scattered all over Union, Gardner and Brussels in Door County. Penniless and discouraged from the hard journey, they here met with much unexpected hardship and denial of the necessities of life. They would gladly have left all their hopes of independent prosperity if they could have returned to their humble but accustomed conditions in the

fatherland. But they had no means of returning. They could only pour out their homesick longings in their letters telling of their disappointments. While not all were disappointed, the reports of most of the immigrants were so gloomy that very few were tempted to follow them. There was quite a large emigration in 1857 which was due to the fact that the gloomy reports of those who had emigrated the year before had not yet reached their relatives in Belgium. The Belgian mass emigration from the rural districts came to an end almost as soon as it had started.

Among the earliest settlers in Door County was Mr. Constant Delveaux who died in 1923 at the age of ninety-three years. When he was ninety years old he, at the request of his pastor, Father J. J. Gloudemans, wrote a short account of his voyage to America and his early years here. This is the only reminiscence left by any of the old pioneers in writing and is given below in Father Gloudemans' translation. Mr. Delveaux and his companions arrived in Green Bay about the middle of May, 1856, and spent the following summer among old friends in *Aux Premier Belges* (Robinsonville). In November they moved to their lands in the town of Brussels. His letter follows:

We left Belgium March 18, 1856, to betake ourselves to America. We remained two days in the city (Antwerp) and on the third day we boarded the ship *Lacedemon*. We left the harbor of Antwerp and proceeded towards the entrance of the channel. There we remained three days before we could raise our sails. Then after a while we passed very close to a ship on which there were some of our neighbors. Our captain informed us that they were going to wait another day but we kept on, but when we were about ten miles out, we encountered such terrific wind that it broke the three masts of our ship. The first mast was brok-

en at the first section (a la premier etage). It was five feet in circumference and the other masts were broken also. The passengers on the other ship were told that the Lacedemon was perishing. Our ship remained listed on its side, drifting helplessly for many days, and signals were given to the city of Flushing. The sailors cut the rope with axes and the vessel righted itself somewhat. A boat arrived from Flushing and towed us to the government shipyard. In order to make repairs it was necessary to get an entire pine tree just as it stood; this they loaded on the shoulders of the men, one on the right, another on the left, in a double row. It was very difficult for us to walk thus together. We stayed 23 days waiting for repairs, but finally we left on April 23rd. We had a beautiful voyage. We arrived in Quebec May 12th. A little boat towed us through the St. Lawrence River. At Quebec we disembarked but left all our baggage on a small boat to be transferred to a boat running from Quebec to Montreal, 60 leagues. At Montreal there was another transfer to take us to Toronto, where we transferred to cars as far as Lake Michigan and from there sailed to Green Bay.

At the time there were very few houses there. My father went to get some meat, and after leaving the butchershop we cooked the meat right there near a cedar grove. A priest, Pere Baudoile (Bonduel), came and spoke to us. He was very glad to see us. Patris had a letter from a priest in Belgium to give to a lawyer in Green Bay, lawyer "Oute" or "Houte"? The lawyer gave him a township plat and said in order to find the landholdings we should find a Mr. Rikare (Ricard) who was able to talk French, being a Mexican. He lived at Red River about 12 miles away from our allotted land. We found him; he took his compass along and took us directly to Section 6, Township 26, Range 24, which was the place he had to find for us. There my father, Ferdinand Delveaux, took four forties of Section 6, Alexis Franc 2, Patris 2, and Dandois 2. They made payment for

the land which they were going to work.

At the time we went to see Mr. Rikare at Red River, we saw some cabins of the savages Indians and I said to Mr. Rikare: "How those people look at us!" He answered: "No wonder; you are the first white people setting foot on land here." Mr. Rikare came to show us our land and we asked him to make us a little map to show us the line we had to follow when returning. The next day we returned all the men together to make little cabins with trees and branches to sleep under. That first night we had a rainstorm so severe that our gun barrels were full of water. That being the first night, things looked very disheartening to us.

These are the families who were the first emigrants to America to settle on Brussels territory: Ferdinand Delveaux and family; Etienne Dandois, his son-in-law; Alexis Franc and Francois Patris. We had become like brothers together on our trip, having chosen our homesteads together. Previous to leaving the old country, Patris and Alexis Franc, who lived an eight hours' walking distance from our home, came to visit us, to talk over our adventure and in order to accompany one another. They came then to assure us we would have no trouble buying our land because they had a letter for the lawyer "Oute", and they gave us useful information.

We lived in our new places here three years without seeing a horse. We finally saw one when a Monsieur Smith (Michael Schmidt) went in company with his wife to start a little store at the bay shore. His wife was on horseback and he went ahead cutting the branches so she would be able to pass. The years we were in the woods we saw savages, but they were honest. They would point to their mouth asking for something to eat. Before entering, they would leave their guns at the door. We had big sturgeon and very good fish to eat. There was also good hunting and plenty of game. However, in 1871 fire destroyed everything. In the parish of Rosiere there were only three houses left, and the next night there was a

heavy rain and all the fire was extinguished.

In 1857 there were many newcomers to buy land in our neighborhood. Antoine Woineaux, Francois Gilson, Pierre Baye, Francois Springlaire, Joseph Quatremont and some others. The second year we were settled here, we had a visit from a priest, Father Daems, on his way back from Sturgeon Bay to Bay Settlement. In Sturgeon Bay he had baptized 23 children and had said mass three times, and for his services, he told me, he had received one dollar and twenty-five cents to take home with him to Bay Settlement. In 1867 the wife of Antoine Woineaux died and they had to carry her all the way to Bay Settlement to be buried there in the cemetery. In 1866 a young man, the son of Ferdinand Delveaux, died at the age of 18 years from sickness. He is the first one who was buried by Father Crude (Croute) at Union, the first one in our neighborhood.

Referring to our arrival in Green Bay: We had considerable difficulty getting our baggage. We had to retransport them to Bay Settlement and the roads were very bad to the bay. There was but one place where there was a little dock where we could leave our baggage. It was late in the month of November, and before coming to our own lands we had planted some potatoes at Premier Belge (Robinsonville or Champion). It took the boat two days to deliver all our baggage. It was freezing quite hard and arriving at night they left all our stuff on the bay shore about three miles from our places with the result that all our potatoes were frozen. Those on the boat were Constant Delveaux, Alexis Franc and Francois Patris.

This is the way we started our work: First we built our houses. Then we cut down the timber. We rolled the logs together to burn them. we always tried to cut the roots at the bottom of the stump to have it easier to carry the ground in sacks and with our axes to plant potatoes and make our gardens, so we always worked to increase our clearing. Later on, when we had oxen,

clearing land went faster. We seeded wheat and by means of drags with iron prongs we covered it with ground, twice or three times. We had then already fairly good land. Of course we had to make roads in the swamp. We placed heavier logs on both sides and we cut smaller ones to lay across. They were then fixed together something like a bridge. When all the money that we had brought along from the old country was spent, we were obliged to make shingles, a very rude labor, but we had to do so in order to obtain flour to make bread. We went into the woods to cut big fir trees, sawed them into suitable lengths, then carried them home on our backs to make shingles, which again we had to carry to the bay. Even the children had to carry them in bags according to their strength. Shingles were the only thing we could sell to make money. We actually had to eat dry bread. Bankbills (greenbacks) had no more full value, and when we came back from Green Bay with our money, we always lost on the bills we had received in payment. Often we had to hear that our note was only good for 80 cents and sometimes 70 cents on the dollar. When we would go to the store, they would tell us our paper was only good for so much. Banks were collapsing everywhere. All during winter we were making shingles and when winter was passed, we worked in the fields. Wheat was 50 or 60 cents a bushel for many a year. I made ten thousand large sized shingles  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick and had to carry them to the bay. All this in order to be able to buy a two-year old heifer which had not yet had her calf. It was hard work to get a cow, but times were hard. Our parents did not see then what we are seeing now—automobiles at all doors, but they have seen misery and want all the time.

Constant Delveaux, son of Ferdinand Delveaux, has written down these informations in order to give knowledge of his voyage to America and his entrance into the woods of Brussels.

This I have done at the request of Rev. J. J. Gloudemans and Mr. Toussaint Mathy who came

to me because I am the oldest man in this neighborhood, having attained the age of 90 years.

CONSTANT DELVEAUX,

Born Aug. 1, 1829.

Mr. Delveaux was born at Grez-Doiceau, Canton de Wavre, Province de Brabant, Belgium.

P. S.: I forgot to tell how we made our houses. This is the way we made our houses. We cut the logs to a size that four persons could carry. We had men from Premier Belge who came to saw them into boards as was done in the olden times and to make us shingles for roofing. They gave us a start to build our houses and we paid them a dollar a day with which they were well satisfied. Besides they taught us how to make shingles.

We brought along from the old country some stones for grinding flour which were three feet in diameter. We had them fixed up for us by our village miller. By means of them we could easily grind a bushel of wheat in one hour with two men working. Once people heard about it, they kept us grinding grain for grinding, and it went night and day. At night we made big wood fires to light up the mill. We would work at two or at four, so it went faster.

CONSTANT DELVEAUX.

The limitations of this sketch do not permit a mention of all the Belgians who settled in this far-flung settlement. The following is a list of those persons, born before 1850, and their families as far as they are known, who came to Door County before the Civil War. A house to house canvass has been made to make the list as complete and correct as possible, but there are reasons to believe that many of those who claimed to have come in 1856 did not come until 1857 and in a few cases even later. The list of pioneers is given in alphabetical order separately for each town—Union, Brussels and Gardner—regardless of the year of



arrival. This list should be compared with the list of land entries given in the next chapter. The list of children's names is incomplete, due to removals, absence from home and other causes.

## UNION

1856. Boullion, Jean B. Born 1840. Married Eau Claire Laysse, 1863. Had seven children.

1856. Carpiaux, Pierre. Born 1820. Married Julie ——— 1845. Children: Josephine, Leonie, Guillaume.

1856. Charles, Jacques. Born 1806. Married Ferdinante Carot, 1827. Children: Joseph, Antoine, Alexander, Marie, Martin.

1856. Chaudoir, Antoine. Born 1819. Married An-joseph Martin 1860. Children: Josephine.

1856. Collart, Martin. Born 1826. Married Jule Dufaux 1851. Children: Josephine and others.

1856. Counard, Joseph. Born 1819. Married Marie C. Collard 1844. Children: Martin, Marie, Augustin.

1856. Decamp, Pierre. Born 1824. Married Phillip-pine Lampereur 1856. He was the first chairman of the town and held this office for nine years.

1856. Degrandganage, Francois. Born 1807. Married Marie Demense 1827. Children: Josephine, Alexander, Pascal, Victor, Alphonse, Felicien.

1856. DeKeyser, Gabriel. Born 1800. Married Rosalie Spruther 1820. Children: Joseph, Angelica, Walter, Gabriel. DeKeyser emigrated from Brussels, Belgium, in 1854.

1856. DeKeyser, Joseph. Born 1839. Married Mathilde Patris. Children: Selina, Florentine, Frank, John, Josephine, Mary, Rosa, Louis, Joseph, George, Mathilde.

1856. DeKeyser, Walter. Born 1844. Married Jo-

sephine Delveaux. Children: Gabriel, Elisa, Joseph, Mathilde, Anna, Julien, Josephine, Edmund, Mary, Frank, Emma, Victoria.

1856. Delwiche, Guillaume. Born 1810. Married Marie Dupure 1838. Children: Felisite, Virginia, Lucie, Jean B., Joseph.

1857. Delfosse, Jean B. came to America in 1853 with his sons, Noel, August, Louis and Eugene, spending some time in Philadelphia.

1857. Delfosse, Noel. Born 1844. Married Julia Hoddy 1877. Children: Harriet, August, Leona, Mary, Rosa. He was chairman of the town for twenty-three years.

1856. Delveaux, Francois. Born 1815. Married Lenore Pierre 1840. Had six children.

1856. Dubois, Melchior. Born 1807. Married Antolie Laurent 1846. Children: Josephine, Marie, Gustave.

1856. Dujean, Jean. Born 1810. Married T. Vandermeuse 1860.

1856. Dupont, Bartholema.

1856. Engebose, Constant. Born 1820. Married Marie C. Ersley 1850. Children: Prosperine, Selina, Julia.

1856. Evrard, Alexander.

1856. Evrard, Francois. Born 1838. Married Florence Patris 1868. Had four children.

1856. Evrard, Jean B. Born 1841. Married Josephine Patris 1868. One child.

1857. Fabry, Guillaume. Born 1806. Married Joan Vaise 1831. Children: Servais, Henriette, Gregoire, Mathilda, Simeon.

1856. Geniesse, Ghislain. Born 1829. Married Emilie Laise 1854. Had ten children.

1856. Gerondale, Charles. Born 1815. Married

Catherine Neuville 1858. Children: William, John, Jule, Joseph, Mary, Henry, Ernest.

1856. Gerondale, Guillaume. Children: Catherine.

1859. Guillette, Florent. Born 1850. Married Orilie Piette 1872. Had three children.

1856. Jenquet, Pierre. Born 1815. Married Marie Dupuis 1844. Children: Joseph, Elizabeth.

1856. Johnson, Jacques.

1856. Laduron, Louis. Born 1840. Married Arsele Williquet 1860. Had eight children.

1857. Laluzerne, Hubert. Born 1835. Married Marie Laluzerne 1866. Children: Octavia, Therese, William, Jule.

1856. Lampereur, Joseph. Born about 1814. Married Seraphine ——— 1839. Children: Cornelia, Octavie, Eugene.

1856. LaRose, Bartholemi. Born 1824. Married Marie J. Williquet 1847. Children: Therese, Julie, Ferdinand, Victorene.

1856. Martin, Pierre. Born 1811. Married Jane Delaire 1848. One child.

1856. Maxini, Francois. Born 1806. Married Marie Beauchamp, 1840. Children: Therese, Ferdinante.

1857. Renard, Francois. Born 1824. Married Mariane Renard 1857. Had eight children.

1857. Renard, Lambert. Born 1834. Married Therese Detry (or Destree) 1862. Had seven children.

1856. Vandergaite, Guillaume. Born 1827. Married Marie Dulgee 1869. Had five children.

#### BRUSSELS

1856. Balza, Michael. Born 1823. Married Julie Jadule 1852. Children: Marie, Sophie.

1856. Bassine, Clement. Born 1824. Married Marie T. Dogcas 1851. Had three children.

1856. Beaugent, Antoine. Born 1828. Married Marie L. Ledocq 1852. Children: Marie, Eli.

1856. Baye, Martin. Born 1816. Married Augustine Dogcas 1852. Had two children.

1856. Bero, Jean B. Born 1810. Married Marie T. Robson 1840. Children: Antoine, Joseph, Marie, Ursile, Marie J.

1857. Brams, Victor. Born 1837. Married Julien Charles 1864. Had five children.

1857. Charles, Jean B. Born 1839. Married Cecile Massart 1850. Had five children.

1857. Coco, Ferdinand. Born 1835. Married Louise Counard 1862. Had six children.

1856. Coisman, Louis. Born 1822. Married Celestine ——— 1852. Children: Marie, Emil.

1856. Cumber, Lambert. Born 1821. Married Marie J. Rouer 1844. Second marriage to Marie T. Kinard 1857. Had seven children.

1857. Dachelet, Toussaint. Born 1833. Married Philomene Befay 1866. Had six children.

1856. Dachelet, Marie, widow. Children: Marcellon, Toussaint, Julien, Josephine. She had twelve children but six remained in Belgium.

1864. Dedecker, Oliver. Born 1825. Married Josephine Piette 1850. Children: Flora, Marie, Theophile, Magdalene.

1856. Delveaux, Ferdinand. Children: Constant, Octavie, Josephine, Celestine, Joseph.

1856. Delveaux, Constant. Born 1829. Married Rosalie Dashby 1862. Children: Ferdinand, Lestin,

Josephine, Anjoseph, Marie.

1856. Demus, Francois. Born 1824. Married Catharine Dishley 1864. Had nine children.

1857. Devos, Pierre. Born 1816. Married Lucie Levand 1848. Second marriage to Marie C. Zeglow 1851. Third marriage to Louise Zoudroy 1872. Had sixteen children.

1856. Dewitt, Charles. Born 1834. Married Marie Lumbe 1853. Had four children.

1856. Englebert, Jean B. Born 1812. Married Marie J. Perrier 1841. Children: Felix, Desire, Joseph, Charles, Marie.

1856. Englebert, Felix. Born 1839. Married Henrietta LeFebvre 1859. Second marriage to Julienne Francart 1875. Children: Julie, Charles, Henriette, Frank, Virginie, Sophie, Marie, Clementine, John.

1856. Englebert, Desire. Born 1841. Married Emerence Gaspart 1864. Children: Eugene, Louise, Joseph, Elina, Josephine, Henry, Nestor.

1856. Francois, Adrian. Born 1830. Married Flora Scetnogel 1851. Second marriage to Fuvia Piette 1863. Had eight children.

1857. Francois, Joseph. Born 1846. Married Desiree Gaspart 1867. Had four children.

1856. Frank, Alexis. Born 1826. Married Desiree Barbeaux. No children.

1856. Gaspart, Louis. Born 1825. Married Selina Lapage 1846. Children: Nora, Jean, Marie.

1856. Guillette, Jean. Born 1848. Married Sophie Gaspart 1870. Had four children.

1856. Gigot, Joseph. Born 1816. Married Catherine Helleau. Children: Marie, Louis.

1856. Gilson, Charles. Born 1792. Two sons, Joseph and Francois.

1856. Gilson, Joseph. Born 1825. Married Marie J. Louis 1846. Children: Alexander, Joseph, Isaac.

1857. Herlache, Alexander. Born 1826. Married Florence Tonon 1852. One child.

1856. Lardinois, Pierre. Born 1810. Married Gelene Malee 1830. Had four children.

1857. LeBotte, Theodore. Born 1823. Married Antoinette ——— 1856. Two children.

1857. Lecloux, Leonard. Born 1831. Married Marie Piette 1855. Had five children.

1864. Lumage, Joseph. Born 1822. Married Marie T. Bricly 1846.

1856. Maccaux, Felicien. Born 1845. Married Felicienne Rouer 1862.

1856. Martin, Francois. Born 1810. Married Therese Massart 1835. Children: Julien, Joseph, Francois.

1856. Massart, Cornelius.

1858. Meunier, Alexander. Born 1810. Married Catherine Marlier. Children: Francois, Alexander, Harriet, Floriente.

1857. Mignon, Charles, with his son, Louis. The latter was born 1842 and married Marie L. Gillis 1868. Had five children.

1857. Mignon, Norbert. Born 1815. Married Nora Laurent 1840. Had three children.

1856. Mohemont, Antoine. Born 1836. Married Henriette Leglise 1845.

1856. Naniot, Antoine. Born 1830. Married Therese Naze 1857. Second marriage to Rette Joquaire 1878. Had four children.

1856. Naze, Amond. Born 1807. Married Rosalie Louis 1830. Children: Eugene, Desiree, Amos and Therese.

1856. Naze, Prosper. Born 1835. Married Ferdinante Dufee 1854. Had seven children.

1856. Patris, Francois. Born 1817. Married Marie J. Toba 1839. Children: Mathilde, Florence, Josephine.

1858. Pierre, Alexander. Born 1831. Came to Alton, Illinois, in 1854. Married Celestine Mignon 1860. Had four children.

1858. Pierre, Francois. Born 1836. Came to Alton, Illinois, in 1854. Married Angeligne DeKeyser 1861. Children: Gabriel, Alphonse, Joseph, Frank, Jule, Henry, Mary, Ellen and Mrs. Frank Swoboda.

1859. Piette, Charles. Born 1835. Married Josephine Rouer 1861. Had six children.

1856. Quartemont, Joseph. Born 1815. Married Rosalie Vachman 1845. Children: Josephine, Emeline, Elizabeth, Virginia.

1856. Rass, Hubert G. Married Mary Jomante. Children: Hubert, Joseph, Honora, Mary, Josephine, Therese.

1856. Reince (Rance), Alexander. Born 1821. Married Efriza Flawin 1851.

1856. Rouer, Joseph. Born 1832. Married Marie Renier 1869. Five children.

1856. Rouer, Theodore. Born 1830. Married Antoinette Eraly 1865. Had six children.

1856. Springlaire, Jean F.

1856. Springlaire, Francois. Married Florence ———  
1850. Children: Emile, Philippine, Ernestine, Augustine.

1857. Thiry, Constant.

1856. Vangindertaelen, Edward. Born 1821. Married Marie T. Kinard 1852. Children: Charles, Louis, Wil-

liam.

1856. Wautelet, Eli, Born 1824. Married Maxine Ottah 1851. Children: Eugene, Felicienne, Versenia, Marie.

1857. Zepherin, Ignace. Born 1808. Married Juliane ——— 1844. Children: Ferdinand, Julien, Ceine, Flora, Julie, Edward.

### GARDNER

1859. Bosman, August J. Born 1830. Married Elinore Bourgueniou 1859.

1856. Quartemont, Francois.

1856. Colignon, Joseph. Born 1834. Married Marie F. Mareaux 1860. Mr. Colignon was County Commissioner, Register of Deeds and County Treasurer for many years.

1859. Corbisier, Adolph. Born 1820. Married Therese Ambrust, 1845. Children: Julien, Oliver, Hortense, Marie, Felix, August, Joseph, Emile, Julia.

1856. Counard, Jean. Born 1805. Married Rosalie Delos 1832. Children: Michael, Antoine, Emile, Louise, Jean, Joseph.

1857. Dalemont, Jean B. Born 1820. Married Frances Granind 1851. Children: Joseph G. and Charlotte. The son, Joseph G., was chairman of the town for thirty years.

1856. Debroux, Joseph and his son Alphonse. The latter was married to H. Wautier in 1871.

1856. Delsipie, Joseph. Born 1830. Married Marie Sacotte 1860. Had nine children.

1856. Delsipie, Guillaume. Born 1820. Married Alexandra Destree 1861.

1857. Dewarzegar, Jean. Children: Josephine, Alexander, Eugene.

1856. Docquir, Jean Lambert. Born 1808. Married



Marie T. Oda, 1834.

1856. Gigot, Henry. Born 1824. Married Therese Lardinois, 1846. Children: Henry, Elizabeth, Delphine, Felix, August, Josephine, William, Mathilde.

1856. Gigot Jr., Henry. Born 1849. Married An-joseph Lalune 1870. Children: William, Joseph, August, Louis Agnes.

1856. Herlache, Chrysostom. Born 1815. Children: Adele, Veronica, Clement.

1856. Herlache, Jean B. Born 1817. Married Marie T. Destree 1840. Children: Therese, Jean, Josephine, August, Rosalie.

1856. Herlache, Alexander. Born about 1820. Children: Alexander, Alfred, Mellanie, Daniel.

1856. Herlache, Clement. Born 1848. Married Delphine Gigot 1873, Children: Sedona, Henry, Isadore, Ernest, Felicity, Lucy, Jules.

1858. Henquinet, Jean. Born 1829. Married Desiree Colignon, 1859. Children: Antoine, Louis, Lucy, Joseph, Marie.

1859. Jenquin, Antoine. Born 1832. Married Veronique Docquir 1859. Second marriage to Minnie Rabior 1872.

1856. Labigois, Joseph. Born 1819. Married Marie Delsipie 1848.

1857. Laluzerne, Leopold. Born 1838. Married Adelle Herlache 1862. Children: Victoria, Veronigne, Desire, Adolphine, Sylvia, Virginia.

1861. Laviolette, Seraphin. Married Marie ——— Children: Seraphin, David, Godfrey. Second wife Anjoseph ———. One son, Jerry.

1856. Neuville, Henry. Married Therese Herlache.

Children: Selina, Jule, Joseph, Natalie, August, Camille, Henry, Jesse.

1856. Neuville, Jacques. Born 1840. Married Marie T. Lalun, 1863. Children: Flora, Isadore, Rosalie, Elisa, Joseph, Mellanie, Josephine, Louis, Marie, Eneas.

1856. Robin, Jean Joseph. Born 1813. Married Marie C. Bacgue 1845. Children: Leocarder, Charles, August.

1856. Sacotte, Francis. Born 1839. Married Anjoseph DeWarzegar, 1858. Had four children.

1856. Sacotte, Florent. Born 1842. Married Sophie Balza, 1876. One child, Prosper.

1856. Tricot, Jean B. Married Marie \_\_\_\_\_  
1839. Children: Delongville, Laura.

1864. Fellier, Antoine. Born 1830. Married Emelie Lonzo, 1857. Children: Aldwin, Mathilde and seven others.

## HOW THE BELGIANS OBTAINED THEIR LANDS

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ORDINARILY when prospective settlers come to a new district to take land, they make a careful inspection of the topography, soil, drainage, etc., and then, sooner or later, go to the land office to file their claims. But this procedure was in most cases reversed by the Belgians who came in 1856. They first went to the land office and asked to be assigned some land in the general vicinity of the Belgian settlement. Upon payment of the required charges the clerk entered their names upon some forties of land in Door or Kewaunee counties as the case might be. As they did not know what kind of land they were getting, this was indeed buying a pig in a poke, and they were therefore very curious to see the nature of the prize they had drawn.

The principal reason for this unusual procedure was the great influx of settlers who came in 1856. These immigrants knew nothing about American land surveys or descriptions, and they came too fast to be taught. For this reason each new group, guided by an earlier immigrant, would tramp the seventy miles to Menasha and there get the proper description of the lands allotted to them by the land agent. Then they would return to Bay Settlement and there await the convenience of a Mexican half-breed by the name of Ricard to locate their lands for them. He was a famous land cruiser, and usually the little group would have to wait some days until he returned from one of his

many continual scouting expeditions. He could talk much Spanish, a little English and a little French. Armed with a compass and the various descriptions, he would plunge into the deep woods, the little group of six or eight men trailing after him carrying axes, blankets and food supplies and wondering by what signs he was able to tell one forty from another. But the half-breed had a remarkable sense of distance and direction. After a day or two of weary traveling he would stop by some hemlock or maple which to the Belgians looked just like a thousand other hemlocks and maples around them. On this tree Ricard was able to point out some mystic signs. This, he would explain with many gestures, was the northwest corner of such and such a one's land. Then he would lead off in another direction, through swamps, ravines and tangled underbrush, until another claim was located and thus continue until all were placed. After this came laborious and perplexing problems for each settler to blaze a trail from his 'corner post', so he could find it again upon his next visit.

Besides these settlers who made proper preemption claims at the land office there were quite a large number who had no money with which to pay entry charges. They usually followed their more fortunate friends to their land locations and then "squatted" on some government land in the vicinity, taking their chances that their claims would not be "jumped" by some new land seekers. As none but Belgians ventured to take land in this region, no "claim-jumping" was done, and the squatters took their time about entering their lands and thus becoming subject to taxation.

Because of the blind method of selecting land described above, the first settlers did not always get the best selections. Some very careless surveyors must have been at work

in the southwestern part of Door County, for much of the best land was marked "swamp land" in the records, as shown on the accompanying plats of Union, Brussels and Gardner. Judging by these surveyors' plats, the reader would think that the Belgians settled on islands in a vast region of swamps. But this is a gross error as most of the land was high and dry. Thus we see all the land in the Kolberg neighborhood marked swampland, although it is one of the best farming sections in Door County. The agent in the land office, guided by the surveyor's plat did not allot this so-called "swamp land", assuming that it was unfit for farming. As a result many of the first settlers were located on stony elevations where the soil usually is shallow and undesirable for farming.

The immigrants who came in 1857 and later usually came direct to their friends who had settled here the year before. They were thus able, with the help of the earlier settlers, to pick out lands in the vicinity upon which they squatted until such a time as it was convenient for them to go to the land office and file their entries. This will explain the late dates in the list below of the land entries of some of the very early settlers.

The following list is copied from the records in the office of the Register of Deeds for Door County and shows all preemptions of land by Belgians in Door County up to 1862 when the Homestead Law came into effect. Many persons known to have come in 1856 will not be found in this list. The reason is that they for the time being were squatters and their lands were therefore not recorded until they paid the fees required by law. In the meantime they often sold their squatters' rights to others. Each claim of forty acres is indicated by a cross. Larger claims are

indicated by parallel lines. The lands marked *swamp* are not necessarily so but were marked *swampland* on the plats of the original surveyors.

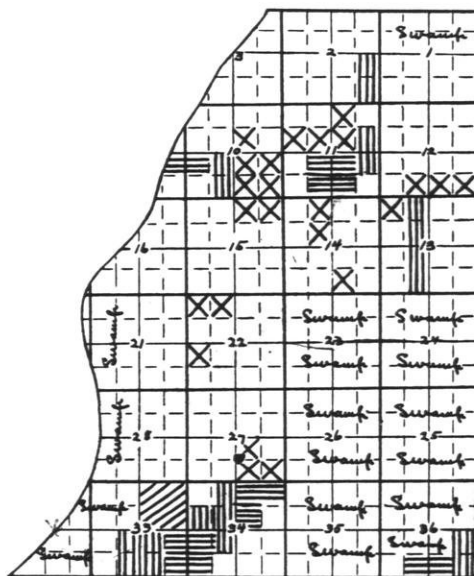
## UNION

Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
2	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Noel	10-3-'56	2-22-'58
2	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Noel	10-2-'57	1-3-'60
10	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Duchateau	7-17-'61	7-9-'63
10	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Xavier Joseph Brans	7-5-'60	10-1-'60
10	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Decaen	7-9-'59	4-2-'60
10	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Alexis Eugene Cordier	8-22-'59	12-1-'60
10	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Pierre Martin	5-27-'57	1-3-'60
10	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and Fract.				
	Sec. 9	97	Octavius J. B. Brice	6-27-'59	4-2-'60
11	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Leon A. R. Duchateau	1-2-'73	5-10-'73
11	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Delveaux	5-4-'59	4-2-'60
11	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Seraphim Lempereur	3-19-'63	5-10-'64
11	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$				
	SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Thomas Desmond	11-20-'57	1-3-'60
11	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Alexander Evrard	7-14-'57	5-2-'59
11	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Julius Dubois	6-7-'89	Not Given
12	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Martin Baye	6-15-'57	5-2-'59
12	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Ann J. Lecoq	5-27-'59	4-2-'60
12	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Gerondale	7-3-'57	5-2-'59
13	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Felicien Le Swisse	5-24-'76	8-30-'82
13	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Gabriel De Keyser	7-20-'57	5-2-'59
13	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Francois de Grandganage	7-3-'57	5-2-'59
14	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Martin Collart	7-14-'57	5-2-'59
14	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Conrad	7-14-'57	5-2-'59
14	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Francois Evrard	4-18-'72	1-25-'73
15	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Guillaume J. Delwiche	7-14-'57	5-2-'59
15	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Jenquet	8-22-'59	12-1-'60
22	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph (or Jacques) Charles	2-26-'62	9-10-'62
22	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jacques Charles	6-25-'67	1-25-'73
22	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Jeanquart	6-25-'67	4-10-'82
22	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jacques Joseph Charles	4-9-'60	Not Given

## HOW THE BELGIANS OBTAINED THEIR LANDS

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Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
27	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Bartolemix H. Dupont	7-10-'57	1-3-'60
27	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Maximilian Ladusen	1-3-'60	Not Given
33	NE $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Pierre Carpiaux	7-2-'56	5-2-'59
33	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Louis Marchant	9-16-'56	2-22-'58
34	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Guillaume Servotte	5-14-'56	2-22-'58
34	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Jean J. Laluzerne	7-25-'56	2-22-'58
34	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 33 and W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Francis Delvaux	5-16-'56	2-22-'58
36	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph C. Guillette	5-31-'62	5-15-'63
36	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph DeJean	5-29-'63	9-5-'71



Plat of Town of Union showing all lands legally preempted by Belgians before 1862.

## WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

## BRUSSELS

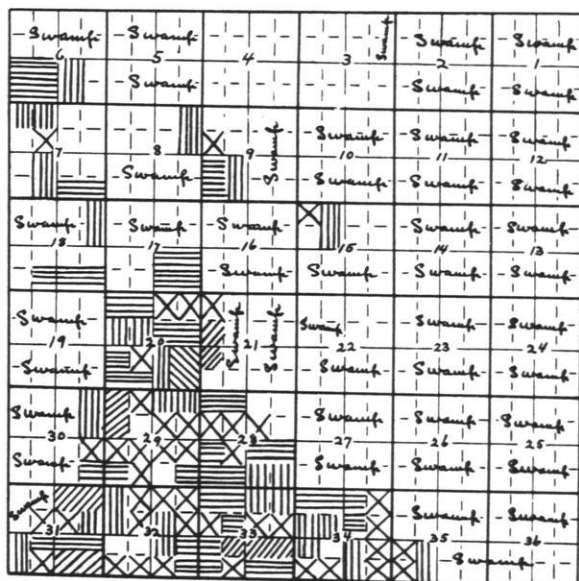
Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
6	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Alexis France	6-15-'56	5-2-'59
6	SW $\frac{1}{4}$	157	Ferdinand Delveaux	11-18-'56	3-1-'58
7	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	79	Francois Patris	3-27-'57	5-2-'59
7	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean F. Springlaire	7-2-'57	5-2-'59
7	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Ignace Zifrien	7-25-'57	5-2-'59
7	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Ignace Zifrien	9-11-'58	1-3-'60
7	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Francois Pierre	11-8-'58	1-3-'60
7	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Martin Baye	6-15-'57	5-2-'59
8	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph Quertemont	7-2-'57	5-2-'59
9	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Marcelin Dachelet	8-23-'59	4-2-'60
9	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean J. Pitaus	9-10-'56	2-22-'58
9	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Chas. J. Gilson	9-10-'56	2-22-'58
15	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean J. Defay	9-25-'57	5-2-'59
15	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Chas. J. Stroobants	1-25-'57	1-5-'60
17	SE $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Oliver Dedecker	1-19-'63	6-10-'70
18	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean J. Herlache	11-15-'58	1-3-'60
18	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Joachine J. Falque	9-10-'75	6-30-'82
20	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Lewis Flemal	2-15-'54	2-15-'76
20	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Celestine Thiery	11-28-'56	3-1-'58
20	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Oliver Dedecker	7-21-'68	7-20-'69
20	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Eli Simon	3-13-'78	11-30-'78
20	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean J. Englebert	10-10-'56	2-22-'58
20	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Leopold Lefebvre	10-10-'56	2-22-'58
20	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Louis I. Coisman	6-3-'56	2-22-'58
20	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Requier	10-14-'57	1-3-'60
21	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Simon	9-18-'58	1-3-'60
21	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Alexander Meunier	9-18-'58	2-5-'59
28	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean B. Waginnan	6-3-'56	2-22-'58
28	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Adrian Francois	5-25-'57	5-2-'59
28	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Antoine Herbigneaux	7-28-'57	1-3-'60
28	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Pierre Francois	5-25-'57	5-2-'59



## HOW THE BELGIANS OBTAINED THEIR LANDS

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Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
28	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	J. B. Englebert	10-21-'63	12-10-'69
28	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph Englebert	2-5-'67	4-5-'75
29	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 20 and N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	160	Louis Gaspart	11-27-'56	5-10-'59
29	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean J. Tonon	4-16-'58	1-3-'60
29	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Mignon	5-25-'57	5-2-'59
29	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Chas. Rouer	12-4-'58	1-3-'60
29	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Desstiens	3-30-'59	4-2-'60
29	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Theodore Lebotte	5-25-'57	1-3-'60
29	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Norbert Mignon	5-25-'57	5-2-'59
29	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Francois	5-25-'57	1-10-'70
29	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Martin Flahant	5-25-'57	5-2-'59
29	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Antoine Mohimont	5-25-'57	1-3-'60
29	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Clement J. Bassine	11-21-'57	5-2-'9
29	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Louis Van Dyke	9-16-'59	4-2-'60



Plat Town of Brussels showing all lands legally preempted by Belgians before 1862.

## WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Claim Date of	Paid Date When
30	E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Constant Le Capitaine	10-1-'77	8-30-'83
30	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Louis Wery	11-1-'58	1-5-'60
30	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Martin Flahant	5-25-'57	5-2-'59
30	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Louis Bero	4-15-'81	12-15-'82
31	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Divos	3-21-'57	5-2-'59
31	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	John J. Bero	3-29-'63	12-10-'69
31	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Divos	5-13-'64	5-25-'70
31	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Jean Pierre Lardinois	5-29-'63	7-13-'71
31	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pascal Francois	10-15-'75	8-30-'83
31	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Joseph Gilson	3-21-'57	5-2-'59
31	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Fayette C. North	5-21-'57	2-9-'60
31	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Chas. J. Thiboune	9-1-'63	5-25-'70
32	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Francis Boucher	12-7-'61	4-10-'62
32	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Clement Thomas	9-1-'57	1-3-'60
32	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Eugene Delforge	12-1-'63	9-20-'70
32	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Fayette C. North	5-21-'57	2-9-'60
32	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Derrit	1-17-'59	4-2-'60
32	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Marc Naniot	7-5-'61	4-10-'62
32	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Edward Vangindertaelin	3-11-'63	6-20-'70
32	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Antoine Naniot	2-18-'59	12-1-'60
32	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Alexander Reince	3-21-'57	5-2-'59
32	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Isidore Tremble	3-27-'63	12-15-'74
32	E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Cornelius Massart	9-1-'56	2-22-'58
33	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Cherlet	1-25-'58	2-5-'59
33	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Grammes	10-23-'58	1-3-'60
33	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean J. Lumage	5-25-'57	1-3-'60
33	N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Constant Thiry	12-18-'58	1-3-'60
33	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Jean F. Martin	3-22-'65	2-15-'71
33	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	John B. Brans	10-23-'58	1-3-'60
33	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean F. Martin	11-8-'58	1-3-'60
33	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Cornelius Massart	9-1-'56	2-22-'58
34	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Elvi Joseph Mantelet	1-18-'59	12-1-'60
34	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Lambert Combre	9-1-'59	4-2-'60

## HOW THE BELGIANS OBTAINED THEIR LANDS

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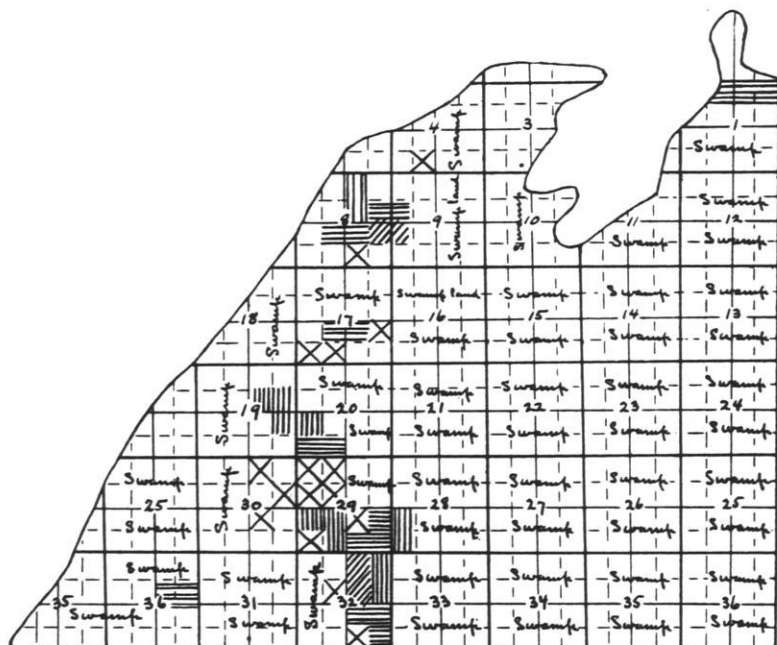
Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
34	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$				
	NW $\frac{1}{4}$	160	John Cisar	2-23-'63	5-25-'70
34	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Charles Ledocq	8-24-'63	7-15-'71
34	W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Antoine Baugnet	11-29-'56	3-1-'58
34	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Charles Ledocq	11-29-'60	7-1-'61
34	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Constant Lomblot	7-8-'61	4-10-'62
34	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Pierre Joseph Distan	12-27-'60	7-1-'61
35	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean J. Gigan	12-3-'63	1-25-'73
35	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Joseph Charles	11-7-'61	4-10-'62

## GARDNER

Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Claim Date of	Paid Date When
1	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Herman Huyssin	3-5-'57	2-9-'60
1	Lot 2 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$				
	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Lot 1	123	Francis de Vivaldi	4-22-'56	6-1-'59
4	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	John B. Dalemont	Unknown	6-24-'78
8	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean B. Balza	10-5-'59	4-2-'60
8	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Adolph J. Corbisier	9-25-'59	1-3-'60
8	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$				
	SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	August Cantin	9-25-'56	2-22-'58
8	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Henri Gigot	5-21-'57	5-2-'59
9	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Henri Gigot	5-21-'57	5-2-'59
8	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Tricot	5-21-'57	5-2-'59
9	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Tricot	Not Given	
17	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Delfosse	3-20-'63	9-20-'70
17	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jos. Labigois	7-20-'59	Not Given
17	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and NW $\frac{1}{4}$				
	SE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Martin I. Sacotte	8-6-'57	5-2-'59
17	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jean B. Docquis	8-6-'57	4-10-'62
19	S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$				
	SE $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Seraphin Laviolette	3-20-'63	9-20-'70
20	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Seraphin Laviolette	3-20-'63	9-20-'70
20	S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean J. Robin	6-2-'57	5-2-'59
28	NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$				
	SW $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Maximillian Counart	4-6-'82	12-30-'84
29	NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Jos. Delsipee	3-20-'63	5-25-'70

## WISCONSIN'S BELGIAN COMMUNITY

Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
29	NW¼NW¼	40	J. Jos. Counard	11-15-'58	5-25-'60
29	SE¼NW¼	40	Jean Chrysostom Herlache	10-5-'60	12-1-'60
29	SW¼NW¼	40	Pierre J. Lalune	5-23-'57	5-2-'59
29	E½SE¼ and SW¼				
	SE¼	120	Marie J. Neuville	6-2-'57	1-3-'60
29	NW¼SE¼	40	Nicholas J. Neuville	6-2-'57	1-3-'60
29	N½SW¼ and SE¼				
	SW¼	120	Jean J. Henquinette	10-21-'80	6-30-'82
29	SW¼SW¼	40	Marie J. Grede	7-3-'57	5-15-'63
30	SE¼NE¼	40	Henry Neuville	7-3-'57	1-3-'60
30	NW¼NE¼	40	Leopold Balza	3-20-'63	9-20-'70
30	NW¼SE¼	40	Michael Smith	6-26-'57	1-3-'60
32	E½NE¼	80	Jean H. Dewarzegar	12-5-'56	3-1-'58



Plat of Town of Gardner showing all lands legally preempted by Belgians before 1862.

## HOW THE BELGIANS OBTAINED THEIR LANDS

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Sec.	Subdivision	Acres	Name	Date of Claim	Date When Paid
32	W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	80	Jean P. Gauthier	12-5-'56	3-1-'58
32	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Francois Sacotte	5-6-'68	11-3-'76
32	N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	120	Ebin A. Veazie	6-18-'57	2-10-'60
32	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	John B. Counard	3-14-'79	2-20-'83
Town 27, Range 23					
36	SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Noel J. Delfosse	2-11-'80	3-21-'81
36	SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$	40	Noel J. Delfosse	12-20-'70	2-7-'73

Preemption lands (that is, lands bought by settlers before the Homestead Law of 1862 came into effect) were supposed to be sold for \$1.25 per acre. However, the same careless surveyors who had marked so much good land "swamp land", marked nearly all the remainder as being of very inferior quality. Because of this error most of the early Belgians were required to pay only fifty or seventy-fives cents per acre. After making their entry they had two years in which to pay for the land. The first to pay for their lands were Jean B. Noel, Louis Marchant, Guillaume Servotte, Jean J. Laluzerne, Francis Delvaux, all of the town of Union; Charles J. Gilson, Jean J. Pitaus, Jean J. Englebert, Louis B. Coisman, Leopold Lefebvre, Jean J. Waginnan and Cornelius Massart, all of the town of Brussels; and August Cantin of Gardner. These thirteen men went to the land office in Menasha in one company February 22, 1858 and obtained their government deeds.

After this we see other groups after much consultation making the same long trip. The largest group contained thirty-two men who on May 2, 1859 marched off to Menasha. See list above for their names. Much lunch and many beers were necessary to sustain them on this journey that took almost a week, but it was no doubt a great event long remembered.

## PIONEER EXPERIENCES

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EVENTUALLY the trail to the pioneer's cabin became familiar, for it was in long use before a wagon road was opened up. In the meantime all the possessions and supplies of these backwoods pioneers were carried in on foot. First came their emigrant chests, laboriously lugged for many miles over windfalls and broken ground. Then came their women and children. A few who were able bought stoves, which likewise were carried in, but most of them cooked over an open fireplace.

Felix Englebert, who was seventeen years old when he came to Door County with his parents, says that it was late in November (1856) before they were able to get a scout to find their land for them. A foot of snow had fallen. For thirty miles the father led his little flock through snow and slush. A shack in the form of an inverted V was built of brush and served as their home for a while. The cooking was done over an open fire, and water was obtained from a hole dug in a nearby swamp. When they needed bread, they went ten miles to get it baked.

Other settlers came from Green Bay in rowboats and sailing vessels. One large company who were bound for the town of Gardner took passage on a small steamer which had just started to navigate the waters of the bay. A mile or two before they reached their destination, Sugar Creek,

the steamer was stranded on a reef close to the shore. This company had a large supply of potatoes with them for their winter supplies and for seed. Melvin Haines whose father had settled near there the year before tells of the Belgians toting potatoes on their backs up through the woods for weeks.

The brush shelters were no protection against the fall rains. Moreover there were many bear, wolves and other savage animals about, and many a choice piece of salt pork was filched before the settlers learned how to protect themselves against these forest thieves. It was therefore necessary to build log houses.

It was close to Christmas time before all the settlers had built their little loghouses, roofed over, some with shingles and some with cedar bark. There were in most cases no nails or other hardware in the construction of these houses. The floor (when there was one) consisted of split logs, the chairs were benches of split blocks, the beds (most often two two-storied) consisted of balsam twigs and leaves, and the trunks served as tables. The whip-saw was necessary to rip a log into planks for a door, but hinges were often made of leather strips or, still better, of knots and crotches of limbs. Last to be built was the fireplace and huge chimney built of field-stones, laboriously carried together from far and near and laid up with clay. When this was done and the first pan of salt pork was fried over the fireplace *within* the house, they felt that they had a home indeed.

Now came the most important work of all, and that was the clearing of land. Around them stood the dense woods with huge trunks. There was no market for logs at that time, and they had to be rolled together and burned

up. It was a terrible, backbreaking job to pry those huge logs together, many of them three and four feet in diameter, and they were slow to burn, green as they were. But almost continuously through the winter the piles of brush and logs were smoking and blazing.

By spring every Belgian settler had a little clearing around his cabin, studded with stumps. But now the settlers' few dollars were all gone and it was necessary for nearly all to leave home and earn some money. So they left their wooden shoes behind them and departed for Green Bay, Oconto, Marinette, Milwaukee and Chicago. Before going they had bought, begged or borrowed a little wheat for seed from the people of Bay Settlement. A harrow was made with wooden pins sloping backward, so they would slide over the roots and snags. These harrows were dragged back and forth by the women and children until the seed was well covered, and soon the clearings were covered with the green growth of the wheat.

And now for many weeks and months at a time, the women and children were left alone in the little loghouses scattered through the woods. The loneliness of those days and especially nights was never forgotten by the women, who, startled at every sound, imagined themselves attacked by Indians and wild beasts. Trembling behind barricaded doors they heard strange noises around the cabin and sometimes, peering through the window, they could see a skulking wolf or inquisitive bear. During these spring and summer months there was also great scarcity of food in the settlement. Many families did not taste bread for weeks, there was no milk or butter, and the diet consisted largely of fish, wild onions, roots and berries.

But at long intervals there was great rejoicing in the



little cabins when the husband or father came to visit his little family. On foot he came walking from Milwaukee or some other distant point, a hundred or two hundred miles away. Nor did he come empty-handed but brought some food supplies, little kitchen utensils and a ribbon or two for the children. Perhaps the best gift, the report of which was carried over the whole settlement, was a lusty calf which Chrysoston Herlache carried on his back, kicking and struggling, for twenty-five miles from Bay Settlement. This calf was to become the ancestor of the Herlache herds.

In due time the wheat was harvested and threshed. Now came the problem of getting the wheat ground into flour. As the men were still away to work, this problem also devolved upon the women. The nearest places where wheat could be ground were Algoma and Bay Settlement, and no wagon road led to either place. It was therefore customary for a woman to take a bushel of wheat on her head and walk to the mill with it. To an American of to-day, it would be quite impossible to carry even a half bushel of wheat on his head for any considerable distance, but the Belgian pioneer women had strong necks, being accustomed to carry heavy burdens that way. Moreover, their mode of carrying the wheat permitted considerable freedom of motion, which was necessary for one walking on a rough forest trail. The wheat was put in a bag which was securely tied at the opening. Then the bag was turned upside down and one corner of the bag was pushed back into the other corner so that this formed a rough hood. This hood was placed over the head, while the other end of the bag was tied securely to the back by means of a rope under the arms. This left the hands free, and with this burden on her head and back, the woman trudged indomitably on for twenty or

thirty miles through the forest.

Not only were these trips to the mill very laborious but they were also dangerous. Seraphine Lampereur, the great-grand-mother of the present chairman of the town of Union, once took a bushel of wheat on her head and started off to Bay Settlement to get it ground. She took a substantial lunch with her, for it was a forty mile trip going and returning. Nothing happened on the way to the mill.

It was late the next morning before the wheat was ground, but finally she started homeward, happy in the thought of making bread for her children. It was getting dusk, and she was still many miles from home when she suddenly discovered that she was pursued by a flock of timber wolves. It was impossible to run with the heavy burden on her head, so she threw down her precious bag of flour and also her lunch, of which she in her excitement had eaten but little, and, with a cry for help to the Holy Virgin, took to her heels. The wolves stopped to fight over the lunch and the bag, and she was able to reach the hut of a settler.

The endurance of these Belgian women is incredible. Mrs. Cornelius Massart of Rosiere heard that a new mill, driven by water, had been installed at Red River, some ten miles from her home. She took a bushel of wheat on her head and carried it to the mill, but unfortunately the mill was not yet in operation. About three or four miles from Sugar Creek was the home of Constant Delveaux, who was reported to have brought two mill stones from Belgium. Being in great need of bread for her children, Mrs. Massart continued northward along the shore to Sugar Creek, about thirteen miles, and then turned southeast on a trail that led to Delveaux. This journey of more than twenty-six

miles she made in one day carrying her bushel of wheat the whole way. She stopped there that night. The next morning her wheat was ground, four persons being required to turn the stones. Thereupon she took her bag of unsifted flour and returned to her home.

When her husband came home and heard of this, he determined that his wife was to have no more such trips. He searched for and found some suitable stones to make a mill, but when he tried to chisel them into the proper shape, he found that his skill as a stone cutter was unequal to the task. However, a neighbor, Louis Coisman, was able to make a good job, and soon this new mill was grind-



ing flour for the neighborhood to the great relief of the women. One of the stones of this old mill may still be seen immediately behind the new church at Rosiere.

In the fall of 1857 a severe financial crisis paralyzed most industries, and our Belgian pioneers were unable to get any outside work. They therefore gave renewed consideration to the possibilities at home. Around their homes stood big forest trees containing thousands of logs, but there seemed to be no market for them. Pine logs, the most valuable, were selling for \$1.50 per thousand board feet on the shore, but the Belgians lacked horses or oxen to haul them out of the woods. But if the pine logs could not be gotten out whole with profit, they could be cut into shingles and carried to the waterside by hand. Pine shingles, eighteen inches long and one-half inch thick were worth \$1.50 per thousand in Green Bay. Here was a chance to make a little money and all, young and old, became shingle makers. Father and mother sawed the trees and the bolts, the children split them and father shaved them and bound them in bundles. Then they were carried to the shore, sometimes on the back, but better still on two bars by two men. From time to time a schooner came and carried them to Green Bay, but it was necessary for the owner to get a small boat to carry them from the shore to the schooner. A day's wages did not amount to much, but by everlastingly keeping at it the Belgians made money with their shingles. In 1868 4,000,000 hand-made shingles were shipped out of Brussels. By this time most of the settlers had obtained a cow or two which were used both for hauling shingles and plowing.

While at work at home the Belgians all wore wooden shoes or *sabots* as they were called. When plowing, they

wore them without socks, for the *sabots* soon filled up with loose soil. Being warm and dry they were also worn in winter when logging or working around the sawmills. They then tacked on long canvas leggings which made cheap and serviceable footwear. The *sabots* of the women were cut lower than those of the men, and they were fastened on the foot with a strap above the instep. A few could even dance with them but that was exceptional. In those days there were many wooden-shoemakers, and they often produced very artistic *sabots* beautifully carved and colored.

Owing to the crowded quarters of their little log-houses and the incidental unsanitary conditions, the lack of variety in diet, and the absence of medical attention, there was in pioneer times a very high death rate, especially among the children. At first the dead were buried back in the woods, but when Father Daems, the first priest who came to visit them, heard of this, he severely censured this practice and admonished them that, according to the teachings of the Church, the dead should be buried in consecrated ground. Thereafter, for a long time, the dead were carried on a stretcher by four or six men to Bay Settlement, about twenty or thirty miles,—a sad and weary pilgrimage.

For many years the Belgians were ignored by the people of other parts of the county. No help was given them in their poverty and distress, and they received no assistance in building roads or schools or other benefits of a tax-supported government. Living by themselves in the deep woods and unable to talk with people from other parts of the county, they were looked upon as being of little or no account. Nor had they learned to exercise their right of suffrage.

But eventually this situation came to an end through

the energy of one of the early pioneers in *Aux Premiers Belges* by the name of Xavier Martin. As a member of the ten original families, he came to America in 1853, and stayed a few years in Philadelphia, where he learned the English language. He was a very intelligent and capable young man, and when he in 1857 visited his relatives in *Aux Premiers Belges*, he was persuaded to remain as a school teacher. After seeing the condescending indifference with which his countrymen were treated by the older American, Irish and French settlers in the town, he went around among the leading Belgian pioneers and explained to them the American system of local government. He told them that by going to the polls and voting unitedly, they could take control of local affairs, seeing they were in the majority. This suggestion met with a welcome reception and a slate was drawn up. Mr. Martin was a modest man and did not ask for *all* the offices. But he was not too modest. He knew that to be chairman or supervisor of the town was a thankless job full of criticism. Nor was it any pleasure to be assessor or treasurer because both of these offices were concerned with the matter of taxes—then as now a sore subject. He therefore contented himself with claiming the offices of clerk, school superintendent and justice of the peace. The first of this was a matter of necessity because he was the only Belgian who could write English; the second he sought because he was a school teacher and interested in education; and the third he preferred because at that time it was the most dignified and profitable of local offices. The Belgians lived ten miles from the polling place, but on the appointed day the other office seekers, lounging at ease, sure of their laurels, were dumfounded to see an army of Belgians approach, 230 strong,

marching in double file, each clutching a ticket especially printed for them. Needless to say that every Belgian on that ticket (and there were none but Belgians) was elected.

After that for several years the Belgians, from Green Bay to Sturgeon Bay, managed their own affairs, for the news of the Belgian coup at Bay Settlement quickly spread. But after a few years a number of large saw mills were erected in different parts of the settlement. These saw mills and their owners, the lumber companies, were the great destroyers in the twenty-year period after the civil war. They were not interested in the future welfare of the district whose timber they were slashing down and resisted the levying of taxes for schools and highways by all possible means. They therefore had their own candidates for office, pledged to carry out the wishes of the lumber bosses. On election day the mills closed down and every employe was emphatically instructed to vote for the mill candidate or to look for another job. Tables were also set up at the polling places where beer and strong liquor was freely dispensed to all who would accept the ticket backed by the mill. The mills also had their sets of half dozen husky fighters whose business it was to go around and intimidate the opposition and destroy its tickets. Thus by threats, free drinks and violence the lumber companies usually managed to control the elections and thus escaped paying their share toward the development of the district.

There was no road or trail from Sturgeon Bay to Green Bay until a year or two after the Belgians had moved in. Due to the needs of Freeland Gardner who had built a saw mill in Little Sturgeon Bay, a road was then laid out from the Bay Settlement to Sturgeon Bay by way of Little Sturgeon Bay. It followed close to the shore.

A post office was then opened up at Sugar Creek and Michael Schmidt, a German, was the first postmaster. This post office served the whole Belgian settlement, and some of the settlers had ten or twelve miles to go on foot each way to get their mail. As it took some years before the new highway, obstructed by stumps and stones, ravines and swamps, was fit for wheeled traffic, the mail was carried on foot or on horseback. The first mail carrier had the misfortune to lose one of his mail bags, and he saw such dreadful visions of punishment by a stern government awaiting him that he bought a rope and hung himself.

This post office at Sugar Creek and a little store, both managed by Michael Schmidt, were all the public business interests in the Belgian settlement for several years. At the present busy village of Brussels, or Five Corners as it long was called, there was no business enterprise of any kind until 1861 when Francois Pierre opened a small tavern a half mile west of the five corners. About the same time a post office was established there and Pierre became the first postmaster—a position he held for thirty-eight years. He was succeeded by Frank Quartemont who held the office for one year. After him came Moses Gilson who was postmaster for about nine months. Since then Jules Pierre, a son of Francois Pierre, has been postmaster. In 1881 two brothers by the name of George and Matthew Bottkol built a saw mill and grist mill a half mile south of the five corners. Later they sold this property to a company made up of Alex and Francois Pierre, Antoine Virlee and Joseph Dekeyser. This company known as the Pierre-Virlee Co., put in new machinery. They also engaged in general mercantile business, and the new community center became a very busy place. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1917.



A new company was now formed consisting of Eli, Antoine and Joseph Chaudoir. They rebuilt the mill the same year and made it the largest grist mill in the county but only six years later it was destroyed again.

During the many years of wretched highways and no railroads, traveling along the peninsula was chiefly done by means of the steamboats. The first of these local steamers was the side-wheeler *Union* whose captain was Tom Hawkey. He acquired fame by means of the lugubrious trick whistle of his boat which used to frighten Indians and Belgians alike.

The Hart Line, however, became the principal steamboat line. Captain Henry Hart was the captain of their first steamer, the *Welcome*, but never was a vessel more misnamed. Many Belgians, having saved up a little money, would buy a ticket in Green Bay which provided transportation from Antwerp clear through to Red River or Little Sturgeon Bay. This they would send to Belgium to enable a relative or friend to come and join them. But when the stub of this ticket eventually was presented to Captain Hart, he would toss it aside, declaring it was no good, and insist on further payment. If any fuss was made he had his mate, Joe Redline, at his elbow. This fellow with foul mouth and steely eyes, as fierce as any ancient buccaneer, always went around with his fists closed, itching to crash into anybody with the exception of the captain who employed him.

In the dining room of the boat was more of the same "Welcome". At the head of the table sat burly Captain Hart, silently devouring fried chicken while the passengers with doubled disgust would try to swallow a little of the strong corned beef that they had to be content with.

## THE GREAT FIRE OF 1871

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AFTER the Civil War a period of great business revival followed, accompanied by such high prices as had never before been heard of, nor have scarcely been equalled since. Moreover, building operations in a thousand new prospective cities of the West were resumed which called for vast quantities of lumber. As a result the woods that surrounded the Belgian settlers, which up to that time had only been a huge obstacle to their progress, assumed a considerable potential value. A number of mills were erected in different parts of the settlement, piers for shipping the forest products were built at many places on the shore of Green Bay, and the pioneers found that money could be made both winter and summer right at home on their farms.

Foremost among these mills was the Scofield Company's mill at Red River. A pier was built, 1100 feet long, and a mammoth shingle mill capable of sawing up to a million shingles a day. There was only one other mill on Lake Michigan capable of such large output. Hundreds of men, mostly Belgians and Indians, were employed in and around the mill, and a village containing three or four hundred inhabitants was built on the hill on the north side of the road leading down to the mill.<sup>1</sup> On the flat below stood the mill and other buildings including a barn with stalls for a hundred horses. In the beginning it was customary for

the company to go down-state every fall and buy up several herds of cattle which were driven to Red River. The cows and calves were butchered to feed the hungry mill hands, and the bulls were used for skidding logs. Oxen were better for this work than horses, but they unusually lasted only one winter. Almost daily a schooner would take its load of unplanned pine planks and shingles and sail off to Milwaukee and Chicago.

The Scofield Company had a smaller mill on the west side of the waterfall about a mile southwest of Dyckesville. Here, too, most of the employees were Belgians. In 1872 or '73 a remarkable accident happened at this mill. The big boiler suddenly exploded, dividing itself in two. One part shot lengthwise through the mill killing nine persons and, flying through the woods, cut down the treetops like a huge cannonball.

The busiest of these mill centers was Little Sturgeon Bay in the north end of the settlement. Mr. Freeland Gardner came here a year or two before the Belgians and bought up thousands of acres of good timber land scattered all through the settlement. He started one enterprise after another, such as saw mill, gristmill, shipyard, lime kilns and ice houses, and gave employment to hundreds of men. The grist mill, built about at the beginning of the Civil War, was the first grist mill in the county and was a great boon to the pioneers. Sometimes fifty or sixty farmers would be there waiting their turn after having creaked all night over corduroy roads with their wagons pulled by oxen from Red River, Rosiere or Maplewood. There they met farmers from Liberty Grove and Washington Island who brought

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<sup>1</sup> No vestige of this village now remains, but a part of the pier remains.

their grist in pound boats. To accommodate these men Mr. Gardner built a roomy house where they could sleep and cook while waiting for their grinding. He also built a three-story store building where merchandise of all kind was for sale. All manner of produce was taken in exchange.

Not the least important of this produce were the wild berries that grew abundantly in the slashings and open places in the woods. When not occupied with the harvest the women and children would go berry-picking. The next day, washed and dressed in clean frocks, the women would take a pail of blackberries in either hand and another on their heads and carry them five or six miles along the winding woodland trails to Little Sturgeon and come back loaded with groceries and necessities for the children.

Mr. Gardner's most important enterprise was ship-building. At one time a hundred ship carpenters were employed, and the launching of a Gardner schooner was a frequent festival. Ten to twelve weeks was the usual time taken to build a ship from keel to truck, but sometimes that record was improved. In 1872 or '73 the freight rates were very high, and, when the keel of the J. W. Doan was laid, Mr. Gardner promised his foreman a bonus of one thousand dollars if the vessel was launched in sixty days. For two months there was a whirlwind of hustle infecting all from boss to waterboy. Finally came the triumphant climax on the fifty-ninth day, when the new schooner slipped down the skids all ready to be towed to Chicago to be equipped with rigging. She did not go empty, however, but took 700,000 feet of lumber on board, for which Mr. Gardner was paid \$7.00 per thousand in freight charges, or a total of \$4,900.00 for less than a week's use.

With these new markets for their forest products, it

was no longer a weary burden for the Belgians to clear new land but a joy, for every acre of waste woods yielded money that was invested in profit-making cows. Barns were built and horses and cows were obtained. The industrious Belgians who never tire of work began to ruminate on the possible time when they could assume just as pompous a pose as the great landlords of the mother country, and they no longer doubted that the bombastic letters which had lured them across the sea after all contained the gospel truth.

But suddenly, in the midst of these happy visions, came a tragedy so terrible that no pen is adequate to describe it. In the recollection of the old people who still remain from that time it lingers like a horrible, indescribable nightmare. This was the great tornado of fire which overwhelmed this region on Sunday October 8, 1871. Suddenly, in the great darkness of the night, a vast torrent of fire descended upon them, like the crash of judgment day, burning their farms to barrenness and destroying their homes and woods and the lives of their friends and relatives. The tornado covered the entire Belgian settlement and a narrow fringe beyond, being about ten miles wide and sixty miles long. Here more than two hundred persons were burned to death, and five thousand were made homeless and destitute. Simultaneously another tornado of fire passed up on the west side of Green Bay, bringing death to more than seven hundred people and destitution to a still larger number.

The summer of 1871 was excessively dry. Cultivated lands dried up and cracked, and the swamps needed but a match to blaze up. By the middle of September people became alarmed. Forest fires were raging in different parts all over the county which could not be put out. Several swamps were on fire. Corduroy roads were burning, and

fences were reduced to ashes. From time to time a mill or a homestead was destroyed. No rain came and the fire serpent kept crawling underground, frequently blazing forth, destroying timber which had stood for centuries. The air all over the peninsula was oppressive to inhale. At night the sight was ominous. All around the horizon were seen intermittent flames, and the dark red, as seen through the smoky atmosphere, threatened a greater calamity soon to take place. The days dragged by, and the settlers fought the fire as best they could. Each day the people sighed and prayed for rain, but each day's cloudless skies and restless winds only increased the unceasing drouth.

Sunday (or "Saddy", as it was afterward called), October 8th, the morning dawned with no perceptible change. In the afternoon the wind was quite fresh but died down in the evening, and an unnatural stillness followed. Then, suddenly there came a fierce gust of wind, followed by a loud roaring. In the southwest dense clouds were noticeable. Then a flame shot up quickly followed by many leaping tongues of fire. Soon the flames were almost obliterated, however, by huge columns of smoke which now and then split apart, showing a furnace of fire behind. The terrific roaring of the wind together with the crash of falling trees caused the stoutest hearts to faint. The night was made more hideous by the startling cries of birds, flying frantically in every direction. Wild animals came bursting into the clearings, with whimpering voices seeking shelter among the bellowing cattle. People heard, saw and felt the terror of the lawless elements that had engulfed them, screamed with terror and fled in confusion along the highways and into the fields. Then suddenly a whirlwind of flame, in great clouds, from above the tops of the trees, fell

upon them enveloping everything. It was an atmosphere of fire. People inhaled it and fell down dead. Almost all, both the victims and the survivors, had but one thought—"it is the end of the world!"

While the fire destroyed almost all the buildings in the Belgian settlement in Brown and Kewaunee counties, and caused the loss of many lives there, the greatest destruction occurred in that part of the settlement which lies in Door County, particularly in the town of Brussels. Here about one hundred and thirty persons lost their lives. At Williamsonville (now known as Tornado Park, ten miles southwest of Sturgeon Bay), sixty persons were burned to death in the the middle of a three-acre field, where they had fled for safety. The terrible experience of that little village of people is beyond imagination, but we have a description by one of the survivors.<sup>1</sup> In Section 26 of the Town of Union, the Scofield Company had put up a saw mill which was not yet completed. About thirty men were employed, but as this happened on a Sunday, most of the mill hands, who were young Belgians from the neighborhood, had gone to their homes. Thirteen men were in the boarding house. Suddenly they were aroused by an avalanche of fire that was sweeping toward them. They rushed out seeking shelter in a field of potatoes. Eleven of them were struck down by the rushing flames, but two turned aside and ran toward the mill. In the flume beneath was about two feet of water, and there they lay while the mill was burned down over their heads. The water in the flume became so hot that they were almost boiled to death. The eleven who perished

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of this calamity, see *Peninsula Historical Review*, Vol. V: 41-55.

were unknown to all and were buried in a common grave in the churchyard in Dyckesville.

The following partial list of sufferers will show how general was the destruction in the Belgian settlement in Door County :

#### BRUSSELS

- Boarding House, mill and other buildings of Scofield and Latham.
- Toussaint Dachelet, barn, crops and furniture and clothing.
- Francis Denis, house and contents, barn and crops and stock.
- Eugene Renquin, house and contents, barn and contents.
- Oliver Dedecker, house and contents, barn, crops and stock.
- Chas. Piette, house and contents, barn, crops and stock.
- Alexander Meunier, house and contents, barn, crops and part of stock.
- Eli Simons, house and contents, barn and crops.
- Frank Legreve, house and contents, barn and crops.
- Louis Coisman, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and part of cattle.
- Theodore Labotte, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Louis Gaspart, barn and crops.
- Adrian Francois, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Joseph Francois, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Peter Francois, two barns, crops and farming tools.
- J. B. Englebert, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Joseph Englebert, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Desire Englebert, house and contents, part of crops and farming tools.
- J. F. Flemal, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.



- Charles Mignon, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- N. Mignon, house and contents, barn, crops, farming utensils and cattle.
- Antoine Mohemont, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Clement Bassine, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- J. B. Denamur, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Unknown, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- J. B. Dewitt, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Chas. Dewitt, barn, farming tools and part of crops.
- Constant Flemal, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Leonard Leclou, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Eugene Delforge, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Francis Martin, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.
- J. J. Lumage, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- C. Massart, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Dr. Antoine, house, contents and pharmacy.
- Chas. Rouer, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Jos. Rouer, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Louis Mignon, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Leopold Lefebvre, house and contents, barns, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- John B. Stroobans, house and contents, barn, crops farming tools and cattle.
- P. J. Rinier, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.
- Filician Maccaux, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.

- Joseph Piette, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Francis Gaspart, house, barn and crops.  
J. J. Bero, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
E. Vangindertaelen, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
A. Naniot, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Alex. - Pierre, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Prosper Naze, house and contents, blacksmith tools, barn, crops and farming tools.  
John Fauville, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Isidore Tremble, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
Chas. Thiboune, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
Pascal Francois, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
J. G. Gilson, house and contents, barns, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Antoine Virlee, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
Francis Springlaire, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Eloi Meunier, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
A Bohemian family lost house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
Two school houses and one church.  
Nine families in this town, the members of which were all burned to death, also had everything burned.

#### UNION

- G. Fabry, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
J. Johnson, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
Francois Delvaux, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
William Laluzerne, house.

Wm. Gerondale, house and contents.  
Emil Befay, barn, crops and furniture.  
Gustav Pensis, house and contents.  
P. Jenquet, barn, crops and furniture.  
Frank Evrard, barn, crops and farming tools.  
Martin Coullard, barn and crops.  
Francis Counard, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
Caspard Duvy, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
Gullaine Lenais, household goods, barn, crops and farming tools.  
Charles Gulette, house and contents, barn, crops, farming tools and cattle.  
Jean Dejean, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools and part of cattle.

## GARDNER

William Delsipee, barn and crops.  
D. Coffin, barn and crops.  
S. D. Welden, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
H. Gigot, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
J. B. Tricot, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
A. Corbisier, house and contents, barn, crops, cattle and farming tools.  
J. Henquinet, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
J. Corbisier, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
P. Farley, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
J. Robin, house, farm and crops.  
G. Laviolette, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
J. Lalune, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
H. Neuville, house and contents, barn, crops and farming tools.  
L. Laluzerne, house and contents, barn, crops, and farming tools.  
J. Dalemont, barn and crops.

Wm. Claflin, house and crops.

J. Neuville, house and crops.

Williamson's shingle mill and all buildings (12 to 15) connected with it.

Three school houses and two churches.

At Red River all the inhabitants of the village fled out on the long pier waiting to see the thundering flames devour their homes on the hill, but through some strange circumstance the rushing tornado here made a little detour and spared the village. This also happened in the northern part of Union and a part of Gardner which escaped destruction in this cataclysm. But elsewhere the settlement was laid in utter desolation. The homes, barns and granaries filled with the fruits of a summer's toil were destroyed; the cattle were burned to a crisp while fleeing through the woods. Even the green timber for township after township was totally destroyed. The plow handles were burned in the furrow, the logs in the corduroy roads were consumed, even the swamps were burning two and three feet deep.

What sustained these pioneers in their successive battles with a savage nature? In toil, self-denial and loneliness, beset by poverty, hunger and the irresistible ravages of nature, they struggled on dauntlessly. What were the forces that impelled them onward? It is not easy to plumb the reactions to circumstances so strange both to them and to us. Perhaps, first of all, it was the sturdy manhood characteristic of pioneers; then, probably, it was a sanguine hope of ultimate prosperity; finally the fatalism of their religion carried them onward:— What happened was fore-ordained by God, and His will they accepted submissively, but not dejectedly.

## A LITTLE CHURCH HISTORY

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WHEN THE early French pioneers of Beau-Pre settled in the wilderness of the St. Lawrence valley, they were much comforted by the report that the Holy Virgin had appeared among them in a vision. This was taken as divine assurance that, although far from the altars and churches of the home land, they were not forgotten by Heaven, but the Mother of God was with them, solicitously interested in their welfare.

As it was in the woods of Beau-Pre, so also was it in the Wisconsin wilderness where the Belgians had sought a home. There, too, the Holy Virgin appeared in person, and the first house of worship was built on the spot blessed by her presence. This is said to have happened August 15, 1858 in the heart of *Aux Premiers Belges*, and there are still many people who remember with what grateful exultation the people received this wonderful testimony of the Virgin's favor.

On that auspicious Sunday morning, Adele Brice, a girl of eighteen, was returning from holy mass in Bay Settlement. She had risen early to get her work done, for she had a ten-mile walk to church, and the woodland path was rough and hilly. After mass she was returning, weary but happy with the joy of youth and the comfort of having done her duty. When near her home she was about to pass between two white-boled birches crowned with a glory of

green leaves, when suddenly, between these birches appeared the Holy Virgin. Dazzled by this heavenly apparition the girl sank to her knees covering her eyes. When she looked up the vision had disappeared. Fervently praying she remained on her knees for some time. Then, when she arose to go, the vision again appeared. Again the maiden was overcome by awe and kneeled in worshipful humility. When she arose again the Virgin appeared for the third time. Strengthened by prayer, Adele now remained on her feet. She could not find words to ask what message the heavenly visitor had for her, but her beseeching eyes presented the petition. Then the Madonna spoke to her, commanding her to teach the children, to devote all her time to it, and to build a chapel on that spot.

It was a long time before Adele Brice could tear herself away from the sacred spot, but finally she went home and told her parents of her vision. Amazed they heard her story and told it to their neighbors. Soon the news had reached to the most distant parts of the settlement, and everyone was discussing it. Some felt greatly exalted at this mark of divine guidance, while others sneered at it as the invention of an excitable and imaginative seeker of sensations. But this latter view did not seem reasonable to many. They had known the young girl from her childhood, and there was nothing remarkable about her except her gentle modesty and her deep religious temperament. She had had access to no books of fiction; where could she have conceived the revolting idea of using the name of the Mother of God for the purpose of deceiving her own people? No, it seemed better to take the story at its face value. Their children needed to be taught, and no one was better fitted to teach them than this devout young woman.

And this view quickly became dominant. From far and near, from Green Bay and the distant cabins in Union, Brussels and Gardner, people came to look on this holy ground. The same fall a chapel was built on the spot and a schoolhouse close by. But the bishop and the local clergy were not among those that believed. They publicly declared that the alleged vision was a myth and an imposition. As Adele Brice continued to affirm the truth of her story, she was even denied the holy sacrament, and for a time was treated as an outcast of the church.

But this made no difference to the Belgian settlers. They did not waver in their faith, but gathered in large numbers to worship at the 'Chapel of the Holy Virgin', as it was called. No priest came near, but on certain days, under the direction of Adele, hymns and even certain parts of the mass would be sung, and she would lead in prayer. Within five years a new chapel was built on the spot, also a church, a larger schoolhouse and a convent in which boys and girls were educated and boarded for a nominal consideration.

Thereafter on each fifteenth day of August thousands of worshippers came to this sanctuary to offer up their devotions. Pilgrims from distant states and cities came here to pray. Many cripples also came and, with a triumphant faith gained in that holy place, were able to walk out whole, leaving their crutches behind. Then, finally, the church authorities could withhold their blessing no longer.

The Belgians of Door county lived too far away to come very often to this hallowed shrine; but they were not forgotten. From time to time came Father Daems on foot to visit them. His meetings were usually held in the house of Guillaume Delwiche near Fairland. A small table cover-

ed with a white cloth served as an altar. On the table stood a crucifix and two polished candlesticks, and the priest, vested in the robes which he had carried on his back all the way from Bay Settlement, would say a low mass and preach to his little congregation. The house of Delwiche was thus for years the sanctuary of the Belgians of Union, Brussels and Gardner, so that when later (1860) a log church was built, a mile east of the Delwiche house, the congregation continued to be called the congregation of Delwiche, and is even to-day quite generally known by that name.

In a few years two parishes were organized and churches were built. The first was St. Hubert's Church which was built a half mile northeast of the present church at Rosiere. The church was destroyed in the fire of 1871, and the question then arose, where should the new one be built? In a rural community no question is more pregnant with trouble than the location of the church. So it also proved here. The trustees decided to build on the main road at Rosiere and were supported in this decision by the majority in the congregation. This did not please the people in the Misere neighborhood who wanted to build the church on or near the old site. The priest, who had had other trouble with the trustees, sided with the group in the north end of the parish and the disagreement became more bitter. The priest denounced the members of the Rosiere faction as blackhearted people, in comparison with whom the Misere people were as white as snow. Having nothing else of importance to talk about, the 'black people' and the 'white people' kept the quarrel going as long as possible, and finally each faction built its own church, which explains why there are two Catholic churches only two miles apart.

Almost simultaneously with the beginning of St. Hu-



bert's parish, another parish, St. Mary's, was organized, and a church was built in 1860 at Fairland. Three acres of land were donated by Alexander Evrard. This parish included the northern part of Union, the northwestern part of Brussels and all of Gardner. As the people in the last town had a long way to go, it was not long before efforts were made to create a mission church in the center of the Gardner settlement. In 1866 a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist was built on the farm of Jean Joseph Robin, and a small tract of land was consecrated as a cemetery. When it became necessary to dig a grave, it was found that the soil in the cemetery was only a few inches deep, so that no graves could be excavated except by the liberal use of dynamite. Here was a perplexing problem. As the cemetery had been officially consecrated, the parishioners felt that it should be devoted to its intended purpose. It was impossible to dig downward, but what was there to hinder them from building the cemetery upward? A stone wall about six feet in height was therefore built around the cemetery, and the hills and knolls of the vicinity were scraped of soil sufficient to fill up the enclosure to the top of the wall. The result was that this "hand-made" cemetery stood up above the surrounding fields like the first story of an Egyptain pyramid.

A little north of this church and cemetery was a swamp about a quarter mile wide extending a long distance east and west. A road had been cut through, but in spring and other times of heavy rainfall the corduroy pavement became impassable because the logs bobbed up and down and floated around, to the great annoyance and discomfort of the churchgoers living north of the church. When the church in 1871 was destroyed in the great forest fire, the parish-

ioners in the northern part of the town (who were in the majority) insisted on building the new church on a site north of the swamp a mile from the old church. This new church was later known as St. Joseph's church.

But the people south of the swamp did not like the idea of going to church with wet feet any more than their brethren to the north. The priest, who also had to cross the swamp, fully agreed with them. Especially was Jean Joseph Robin opposed to any change of location. He personally offered to pay the greater part of the cost of a new church, and with this priestly and financial backing the church of St. John the Baptist was rebuilt on the old site.

But this was not the end of the matter, for committees and delegations, first from one church and then from the other, lumbered down the long road to Green Bay to lay their case before the bishop and claim the episcopal sanction for their respective churches. At first, on the recommendation of the priest, he recognized only the church built by Mr. Robin, but as the delegations from St. Joseph's church did not cease their pleadings, he finally after some years recognized this also. In his comments he remarks that he had more trouble over the church squabble in Gardner than was furnished by all the other parishes in the diocese collectively.

But the church troubles in the town of Gardner were only in their infancy. No sooner had both of these competing churches obtained the blessings of the Church, than some new and most important developments took place. There was in Green Bay a Belgian saloonkeeper by the name of John B. Everts whose wife became very ill. After trying several physicians without success, he was directed to a spiritualistic medium who claimed the gift of healing. His

wife greatly improved during her treatment by the Spiritualist and finally recovered her health. When Mr. Everts paid for the services rendered, the Spiritualist looked at him in a searching manner and said: "You, too, have the gift of healing; you also have the gift of prophecy. If you will stop your business of selling rum and permit the spirits to work through you, you will become a great speaker, bringing messages of power to a people hungering for light." Greatly impressed by this greeting, Mr. Everts, who had hitherto been a sordid saloonkeeper, gave up his former business and later became a noted medium.

Soon after this Mr. Everts came to Gardner to visit relatives. While there he held seances in private houses and many became interested. This came to the attention of the local priest, who in a moment of righteous but unguarded zeal declared that no medium could hold converse with the dead if he (the priest) interposed. A Belgian business man in Green Bay by the name of Duchateau heard of this and offered to bet the priest one thousand dollars that the latter could not make good his claim. The challenge was accepted and June 22nd (1885) in the broad daylight of ten o'clock in the morning was fixed for the contest. At the appointed time practically every person in the town and many from outside points were on hand to witness this duel of supernatural powers. The hour came but not the priest. A messenger was dispatched with a horse and buggy to fetch him. The messenger found him home but unwilling to go, claiming that he was not yet fully prepared. However, in view of the circumstances, the priest finally returned with the messenger. But those who had come with vague expectations of seeing the priest wage battle against the formless shades of the dead were disappointed, for the

priest refused to have anything to do with this "infernal business". Instead of that he soundly berated all who were present for listening to heretics, deviltries and false prophets.

This reprimand, delivered in the proper place and time, would probably have been beneficial, but the occasion was not favorable, and the incident resulted in a great victory for the Spiritualists. About forty families left the Catholic Church and united in building a house of worship of their own. One of these new converts, Alexander Dewarzegar by name, discovered within himself supernatural healing powers and became recognized as a medium of intercourse with the spiritual world. The Gardner Spiritualists also received frequent visits from other mediums such as trumpet mediums, materializing mediums and others whose supernatural powers were in high repute.

For some time there was much religious unrest in Gardner as most people did not know what to believe. It may have been this chaotic state of affairs which induced another spiritual freebooter to come here "to fish in troubled waters". This new religious leader was Joseph Rene Villatte, a former French Presbyterian minister who had served a little congregation of Belgians in Green Bay. As the Belgians by nature and antecedents are opposed to Presbyterianism, he saw no future in that field. There were reasons why he could not be ordained a Catholic priest. But in Europe there is a sect known as Old Catholics. They maintain a separate organization, but have practically the same doctrine as the Episcopalians. Mr. Villatte went to Switzerland and obtained ordination from an Old Catholic bishop. Then he returned to Wisconsin and by authority of the Episcopal bishop in Fond du Lac began to proselyte

among the Belgians of Door County. He told his hearers that the present Catholic Church had departed from the faith of the Fathers and was just as filled with error as were the professions of the Spiritualists. Being an able speaker and of very winning personal appearance, he gained many supporters. He also preached regularly in Dyckesville, Red River and Duvall and obtained many converts, but not so many as in Gardner. In 1888 a large church, named The Church of the Precious Blood, was built in Gardner and also a large guild-hall and parsonage. These buildings were at that time the most imposing in the entire Belgian settlement and were made possible by the generosity of Rev. Charles C. Grafton who later became the Episcopal bishop of Fond du Lac.<sup>2</sup> Father Villatte did not believe the Spiritualists would remain long in the field, and with judicious circumspection located his church halfway between the two Catholic churches, feeling sure that the highway difficulty due to the swamp was a matter of only temporary inconvenience which would soon be remedied. This made four churches all within one mile.

Mr. Villatte also conceived the ambition of creating an Episcopal college on the peninsula, and plans and preparations were made for erecting it on a forty-acre tract of land adjoining the church property on the south side. As Villatte had remarkable success in soliciting directions from outside friends of his enterprise, the out look for the pro-

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<sup>2</sup> The principal benefactor of the church was Mrs. Mary G. Waterbury as appears from an inscription on a brass tablet on the wall of the church near the altar. It reads: "A. D. 1886. To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Chauncey A. Waterbury—1817-1876 — The Glebe on which this church is built is given by his widow—Mary G. Waterbury."

posed college was good. Old Henry Gigot says, almost every day Villatte would show us a bunch of checks which he had received. He also received large quantities of clothing and shoes which he distributed among the Belgians."

Having succeeded so well in proselyting, which is not often indulged in by Episcopalians, he now conceived the ambition of becoming a bishop. He went to his old benefactor, Bishop C. C. Grafton, and begged him to consecrate him as a bishop, assuring him that this recognition by the Church would result in his conquest of the entire Belgian settlement. As Villatte had only two small congregations in his proposed diocese, Bishop Grafton thought the request was rather premature and declined, whereupon Mr. Villatte set out to seek a bishop's mitre in other parts. From state to state he travelled and from country to country, until finally on the island of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean he found a Jacobite bishop in the city of Colombo who was persuaded to consecrate him. Exultantly he returned to Door County to build his college only to meet total defeat; for his brethren in the ministry, after investigation, claimed that his consecration had been obtained by fraud and misrepresentation. This was followed by excommunication. Villatte departed to parts unknown leaving many staunch friends behind him among the Belgians, for he had gained their trust and affection. For a while the work that he had begun was carried on very ably by Rev. J. B. Gauthier, but upon his death it began to decline. The church, guild-hall and parsonage in Gardner still stand pretty among the trees, but the congregation now numbers only about eighteen families.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Villatte's work in Gardner and his later sacerdotal ambitions form an interesting chapter in A. P. Curtiss' *History of the Diocese of Fond du Lac*, 1925, Chapter III.

The Church of St. John the Baptist, or Robin's Church as it is generally called, was destroyed by fire in 1894. The little "cemetery in the air" still remains, a great object of curiosity, although its walls have largely crumbled. Most of the members of the church joined the parish of St. Francis Xavier in the adjoining part of Brussels which was organized in 1877. The present beautiful church was erected in 1909.

Another outstanding monument to the religious devotion of the Catholics who worship there is the new St. Hubert's Church now being built at Rosiere. This parish was from the first the most compact and leading part of the entire Belgian settlement and is also now leading in the dignity of its house of worship. The parish lies half in Door County and half in Kewaunee County. Another church on the county line six miles west of Rosiere is known as St. Francis du Paul.

The Belgians are a very religious people and, superintended by the present devoted and capable pastors, their church affairs are reported to be peaceful and harmonious. But according to creditable testimony it was not always so. Mr. Xavier Martin, who was an intelligent and well-informed observer who lived a lifetime in the settlement, gives the following characteristic of some of the early pastors: "The priest was hard to get, and when one would come he was generally a poor specimen of his kind. Some of them were so avaricious that they would refuse to bury a dead child because the parents did not have the ready cash to pay for their services; others were dissipated, some were habitual drunkards; and it was not rare to see a row break out in a church during the service, between the priest and

the officers of his church, terminating in a regular fight, in which there generally came out a whipped priest".<sup>4</sup> Such experiences have not been reported from Door County. Mr. Martin lived in the adjoining part of Kewaunee County.

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<sup>4</sup> The Belgians of Northeast Wisconsin in *Wis. Hist. Colls.* (1895) VIII, page 384.



## BELGIAN CHARACTERISTICS AND CUSTOMS

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THE BELGIANS of the Door County peninsula are a people of rather short but very stocky frame with black hair and brown eyes. About twenty percent have blue eyes.

Their most noticeable characteristic is their friendly, convivial disposition. They are a smiling people and should therefore be good merchants, but they are not much inclined to enter business and prefer life on the farm. This sociable attitude seeks an outlet in many special festive occasions, such as weddings, christenings and family anniversaries, when there is a vast amount of *flux de bouche* with accompanying influx of spirituous beverages. The phrase, *crever ou etouffer de rire*—to split one's sides with laughing — must have had its origin among the Belgians, for they are constantly doing it.

This craving for garrulous companionship is, if not a factor, at least a partial cause of church attendance. All Belgians go to church regularly, the women no doubt prompted by a desire for ceremonial worship, which is without question, also a factor in the church attendance of some of the men. But it was early discovered by purveyors of liquor, that a good location for a saloon was next door to a church, for the Belgians loved to linger over a glass of beer and exchange the gossip of the week. At these times it was also customary to indulge in a little innocent game of *conion*.

To the Belgian these festive gatherings of a Sunday morning are only a sunny spot in the passing week, but to the casual visitor of the austere North they seem to be festivals of superlative good fellowship and hilarity,

"Where resounds the Belgian tongue,  
Where Belgian hymns and songs are sung,  
This is the land, the land of lands,  
Where vows bind less than clasped hands."

The long years of imaginary prohibition have, however, greatly decreased the attendance at these pre-mass and post-mass reunions—not that the liquor was unobtainable, but because the Belgians as thrifty people objected to pay the high prices and big profits which prohibition granted to the bootleggers.

But even prohibition (anathematized by all Belgians) cannot put a damper on the great festival of the year — the Kirmess. This festival comes at the end of the harvest in the beginning of September, which time was the great annual pay day of the common people of rural Belgium. Then they found themselves possessed of their share of the grain bundles of the big landlord's crop for which they had toiled all summer. This brief hour of prosperity was therefore celebrated with a rousing festival called the Kirmess, and their children in the new world have faithfully followed their example.

Kirmess lasts for three days during each week for six successive weeks, a different parish center being the headquarters each in turn, and makes necessary a vast amount of cooking and baking. Not only are the neighbors invited to mutual banquets, but friends from far away are invited and usually come to partake of Belgian hospitality. It was probably the demands of Kirmess preparations that called

into existence the numerous Dutch ovens of which many are still in service. In these huge ovens with the accompanying bakehouses fifteen pies or forty loaves of bread could be baked at once and with better success.

In the earlier days of the settlement the Kirmess dances were very picturesque. A committee of young men gaily festooned with ribbons of many colors, was in charge of the community festival in each parish, and Belgian folk dances were danced on the highway to the singing of Belgian songs under the light of the harvest moon. But when the automobile came into general use, the highway became unsafe for dancing, and the dancers had to crowd into dance halls. The folk dances also went out of use and were succeeded by the Fox Trot and the Charleston because the young people wanted to be "up to date". At present, however, there is a growing demand to revive the folk dances.

Besides the dancing there were also many other forms of amusement at the Kirmess festival such as climbing greased poles, catching greased pigs or giving a blind-folded man a scythe with which he was supposed to decapitate a goose. Foot races were also a feature, and most popular of all, horse races, the winner receiving the bridle as a prize. The following account of the first Kirmess in the new land will be read with interest by all Belgians:<sup>1</sup>

It was late August, the year—1858. On the western rim of that unknown sea of forest that dipped down toward La Baye Verte, a ruddy, opulent looking sun was just tangling itself among the leafy branches of the taller tree tops. Young, broad-shouldered Amia Champaign paused at the

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Lee W. Metzner and printed in *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (June, 1931) 14: 341-353. It was originally printed in the *Kewaunee Enterprise*.

edge of the little clearing that extended a few acres about his log cabin and his eyes lit up with satisfaction as he contemplated the scene. It was a little over two years now since he had left his home in Grandlez in the province of Brabant, Belgium, to test his mettle in this new country. It was exactly two years since he had staked his claim in this wilderness of Wisconsin, in a country, whose very name—Kewaunee—still sounded barbaric to his unaccustomed ears. He proudly viewed the results of those two years' labor in retrospect now—his log home with the adjacent well-sweep, the clearing, the little stable of cedar uprights chinked with moss that housed his oxen and a couple of hogs and lastly, the purposely neat and symmetrical straw stack that he carefully guarded by means of a birch pole cloture. This was his first real harvest and the earth had yielded with an abundance that was almost breathtaking. He paused to multiply his yield by his still virgin acres and the result made him fairly dizzy. Slowly then his gaze wandered back to his dwelling again and oddly enough his countenance fell and the glad light in his eyes gave way to a vaguely disturbing gloom. He turned abruptly into the forest on the impulse of a sudden remembered errand and pointed his *sabots* in a northeasterly direction.

To you and me that walk along the forest trail in the northwestern corner of what is now Lincoln township would be a pleasant, novel and exciting experience. Tall maples and basswoods lifted their clean boles up twenty feet to a leafy, matted arbor. In the gathering dusk startled deer gazed transfixed a moment and then scampered suddenly in panicky flight. There was a faintly perceptible coolness in the hollows now and the tang of wood smoke from settlers' clearings—those thin smoke spirals that bend back to earth on the damp, cool air of evening. If Amia were aware of Nature's bounty or beauty, there was no hint of it in his expression. Something had happened at home that upset, temporarily, all his hopes and ambitions, something that was all the

more serious because it was so intangible. It was his wife this time who was causing him concern. As he trudged stolidly forward, his troubled mind took up again that fruitless and wearying circle of the worried. True they had both been homesick the first year, and a little frightened the time their first-born had arrived, what with no doctor available at any price. However, those matters had quickly righted themselves. Now with a splendid harvest, closer neighbors, and an opportunity to take things easier, his Marie had suddenly become listless toward his plans and what was worse had developed the temper of a tigress. For two weeks already she was irritable and cross and today had come to the climax. He paused to recharge his pipe and he had to smile again in spite of his forebodings. Maybe it was only the laziness due to the heat of midday, but his ox team had stalled in dragging a felled maple. Marie was driving at the time. Suddenly, with an outburst that would have jolted a mule skinner, his good wife had grabbed the ox goad and belabored the animals so lustily that they were glad to run bellowing for their lives. He had to chuckle when he thought of it. The surprised cattle appeared to have actually forgotten about the log that trailed behind them. That wasn't all. Because he had dared to laugh, his wife had turned the batteries of her wrath on him and when she had completely exhausted his lineage, had stalked away to the house and stayed there. At first he thought to consult his neighbor, Clement Joly, young like himself, but then he prudently decided to seek elder counsel instead. He was heading now for his old friend, Jean B. Macciaux. In double harness old Jean Baptiste was a veteran, and incidentally he ran a little tavern, also, up on the county line. Amia was in no mood to visit with others, so he shaped his course to avoid the Kinnart homestead and again the Spinette, Delfosse and Groufcoeur clearings. Now he was skirting the boundary lines of the Denis homestead and here at last the trail widened and he knew he approached his destination. He was on a well defined road, traversing east and

west through the dense forest—the forerunner of the road his grandson snappily describes as “County C”.

The baying of a dog broke the stillness of the evening and a gruff voice admonished, “Allez, Shep!”

“Good, the old man is home,” said Amia to himself.

Any lingering doubt he may have had was dispelled a moment later by the loud, “Bein voila, Amia!” bellowed in Macceaux’s jovial voice. “Is it really you, my friend, or do I dream? Quelles nouvelles?” Then without waiting for an answer, “Sacre bleu, but you are welcome.” He came forward in greeting and now with a friendly slap on the back, he invited “Venons, Amia, un petit gouter-que? Then we will visit—that bench outside—a pipe—a friend—it is a different evening already. But, Amia, you look tired, you drive yourself too—”

“No, no, Baptiste, it is not the work that wearies me. That is why I have come to ask your counsel—but let us drink first to our health—my trouble will wait.”

“You see, Baptiste,” he concluded later as they sat together on the bench in the darkness, “I come to you with his problem because I know you can help me. You have been married these many years, you. To myself I have said, ‘He has a wife and five daughters surely such a one will understand women.’”

“Mais, Amia,” rejoined Baptiste sadly, “you do not comprehend. A wife and five daughters, true and that makes six reasons why I cannot help you. Me understand women? No, no. Amia I am too honest to accept the compliment. At first I had thought to do so, but now — truly I do not expect to live that long. Let me call my Odile. Possibly she can describe the malady. Odile! Odile! Venez ici!”

Obedient to his summons came “la femme Macceaux” from her kitchen to listen in turn, to Amia’s recital of his domestic difficulties.

When he had finished, she said sadly, “Me,

I have not been myself either since the harvest. A heavy heart does not make light work. In our homeland, in Grandlez, they are making ready for the kirmess. In every home they are preparing a feast to welcome the old friends. And here," she paused to grimace, "here for two years no kirmess; not even 'traiter mon pourceau'. No! after a bountiful harvest we get ready to clear more land."

"True", rejoined Amia, "But do not forget, also, the poverty that was our lot in the old country. Here we grow rich. This", and he gestured eloquently, "this is the land of plenty."

"Plenty", snapped the good woman shrilly, "Oui, beaucoup d' ouvrage-deraciner des chicots—ramasser des pierres! Plenty, you are right and if that is all we may look forward to, I, for one, am ready to depart this accursed wilderness," and she strode back angrily to her work.

"C'est le diable ça!" murmured Amia when she had gone. "But that came from the heart." He turned toward the silent Baptiste who had been listening intently and clucked his tongue sympathetically. "It seems the contagion spreads, Baptiste. How, now, my friend? What next is to be done?"

Baptiste shook an admonitory finger.

"Ecoutez, Amia!" There was a growing excitement in Macceaux's voice as he talked. "Just two weeks from last Sunday the good Father Daems will be with us again. That is splendid. On that day we will begin our kirmess; our first kirmess in America! Think of that, Amia! You must appoint the committee (les jeunesses), and if you will permit the offer, my poor place is at your service. I think I have found the remedy you seek, at least it is worth trying. Now then, it is growing late; depart friend to your home and apply it. Portez vous bien, Amia!"

"Bon soir, Baptiste!"

The succeeding days were busy ones in that new and sparsely settled community. Our friend Macceaux had judged the situation shrewdly. Your true Belgian makes a thrifty, patient, hard

working pioneer, but he has the volatile nature of a Frenchman. He works hard and he insists on a little pleasure being sandwiched in occasionally. "Venez manger avec nous!" Quickly the good news spread from clearing to clearing to leave a happy excitement in its wake. In every home preparations for the event went an apace. Old trunks dragged out from under puncheon beds or lifted down from rafters and lofts. There was a feverish overhauling of contents to see if they would yield some bit of finery for the coming event. Leather shoes, long set aside for a special occasion, were re-oiled and made flexible. Fresh evergreen boughs were cut and brought in to replace the old ones that served in lieu of a mattress. Earthen floors were newly sanded and there were long pilgrimages to Dyckesville and Green Bay to replenish the larders with those materials so necessary to that kirmess delicacy, Belgian pie. There was many a friendly argument over these trips and who should make them.

("It was considered a vacation of a sort in itself," one of my old friends tells me.

"A treat?" I ask a little skeptically. "A treat to walk sixty miles with a fifty pound sack of flour, to say nothing of the weight of the other purchases?"

"Well," was his reply, "it was either that or lifting logs and swinging a grub hoe. It was before my time but my mother told me she made the trip often and I honestly believe she was glad to go. It was a change of motion. The grist mill was at De Pere and when you once got to Dyckesville, you would always count on falling in with some acquaintance who was walking your way. She thought nothing of it.")

At last the great day arrived. In the morning Father Daems celebrated Mass for his congregation in the new settlement already called Rosiere, and now, in the afternoon, the committee were fore-gathered at Macceaux's, conspicuous in the blue and white ribbon decorations across their broad chests, the insignia of their office. It was a trying day for our host. In his anxiety to have



events pass off smoothly, he tried to be everywhere at once and to oversee all personally. Once he thoughtlessly invaded the kitchen to see how things in that important quarter were progressing. The day was warm and his face was flushed and there was a singular brightness to his eye that to you or me would simply denote extreme agitation.

"How then, chere Amie?" he addressed his wife. "Is all in readiness?"

It had been a busy week for her, and I believe she was ready to give him a verbal broadside for his intrusion when she noted that telltale gleam in his eye.

"Listen to me," she said slowly and emphatically, with a touch of that suspicion that somehow lurks in every wifely breast. "Listen to me, Monsieur Macceaux. Because they have nicknamed you 'Mouchons', a bird, must you then choose to become a boiled owl? I don't ask or need instructions from you on my job; see to it that you do as well on your end and—remember what I say—stay sober!"

A shout outside provided timely interruption to our host and out he went, glad to retreat. The guests were arriving—and what a hubbub. All the pent-up emotions of two years' suppression exploding in a joyous acclaim at this public reunion or friends and countrymen. Clad in wide trousers and the loose fitting *saurot* or blouse are the men, while the women and girls wear the tight bodice and voluminous skirts of the period, with always a white apron added on holidays.

We will just walk over quietly and stand near the committee and try to catch some of the names of those settlers as they arrive. I don't believe there is another nationality that is so prone to nicknaming friends as the Belgians are, so we will have to ask some one to decipher the names or identify the parties as they come. We will have to depend on our ears now to interpret the syllables into English.

"Bon jour 'Katchet' and 'Mustok', and Pierre and John 'Del Fronsee' and 'Mee an sha sha'—well, well—this will be a day". And in order named

Prosper and Amand Naze come into view and Joe Bouchonville and then two lithe young emigrants from the Lorraine border in old Namur, designated therefor as "Peter and John, the Frenchmen" who are none other than Peter and John Andre, and lastly, their neighbor, John J. Charles. And now from the west comes Clement Barrett and his friends "Gatto" (Frank J. Wendricks) and "Virlee" (Joseph Dantoin). Here are Pierre Mathie, Eugene Groufcoeur, August Denis, Eugene Delwiche, Charley Spinette, Victor Lesmonde and William and J. B. Kinnart. They are all neighboring homesteaders but their joy is none the less great at being together once more in this festival transplanted from the homeland. When a great shout goes up, we inquire the cause but we can't make ourselves heard in the din. We soon learn the reason.

These later arrivals have come from Grandlez and Sansouwer—not in Belgium — in Kewaunee County—and here are Joseph Duchesne, Isadore Gilson, Jean B. Noel, Jean J. Gaspard, Pierre Houart, Joseph de Bauche, Jean Gigot, Pierre J. Pinchart, Jean J. Dhuey, Lambert Higuët, Jean and Joseph Macceaux and Emanuel Defnet. All that early afternoon old friends pour in from every forest trail and in the crowd we see Joseph Wautlet, Jacques J. Frepont, Edmund and August Malfroid, Jean J. Lorge, Xavier Herrally and many others. And they do not come alone. Marie and Odile and Octavie and Melanie and Desiree and Emerance are there too, and in the excitement their cheeks take on a higher color and their eyes sparkle and I find myself hoping that the music and dancing will soon commence.

("Just look at those men and women", said a descendant of one of those Belgian pioneers to me. Straight, strong, clean climbed, splendid physical types. In every pioneer American settlement, too, regardless of nationality, they can be duplicated. How often we hear the statement, "America is great because of her natural resources". Here is the pick of a nation's manhood and womanhood. It took courage to break old ties

and brave the dangers of a new land. It is true that America had an abundance of natural resources, but remember that she also got the men and women that were capable of developing them. It was the combination that made her great.)

They are getting ready for the first dance now — that grand march in the open that traditionally opens the festivities. Joe Lumaye has his cornet out. Carle Massey is giving a few preliminary slides on his trombone, Francois Legreve works the keys on his bass horn and Norbert Mignon is testing out the strings on his violin. I notice though a worried look on the faces of several of the committeemen and Amia Champaign tries to calm their misgivings.

"Theophile Lebut?" he says, "No, friends, he never disappoints. He and his clarinet will be here presently. You may depend on that."

As if in answer, there comes from the forest, apparently afar off, the faint, clear notes of a familiar melody. A hush falls on the assemblage then as the strains of "La Brabanconne" come softly floating on the late summer air — "La Brabanconne" — the national song of the valiant little homeland — "La Brabanconne" with its age old, gripping appeal to all faithful Belgian hearts.

Après des siècles d' esclavage,  
Le elge, sortant du tombeau,  
A reconquis, par son courage,  
Son nom, ses droits, et son drapeau.

As I watch those young people in an alien land, manfully struggling to control the flood of emotions that surge up within them, there is an unexpected tightening of my own throat in response. True enough they are exiles from choice, but the severing of family ties, (to many it meant forever), was none the less poignant. The song ends and the music slowly dies away in the distance. There is a pause while faces remain averted and then, abruptly, there comes again from the forest another tune, this time that zestful, inspiring, marching song of Republican France — the "Marseillaise". Out from behind a tree steps Monsieur Lebut, clarinet to lips, and with soldierly

stride approaches his audience. He is clothed in the blue *capot* of the Belgian military, brass buttons resplendent in the afternoon sun. With that bouyant Belgian spirit again in evidence, radiant smiles break through the tears and with a mighty shout the assemblage gives utterance to that unquenchable spirit of a liberty-loving people, fairly drowning out our friend Lebut's beloved instrument.

Aux Armes. Citoyens!  
Formez vos bataillons!  
Marchons! Marchons!  
Qu'un sang impur  
Abreuve nos sillons!

("I knew Theophile Lebut well," Louis Rubens told me. "He was a splendid musician and he gave freely of his time and talent. He had a flair for the dramatic too. I recall distinctly when he passed away. He had a crony, a fellow musician, living down near Bottkols, by the name of Bernard Steinbach. Herr Steinbach played the requiem mass for his friend on the clarinet. It was very impressive: so much so that it stands clearly in my memory even today.")

And now Monsieur Lebut is among his friends and he is receiving their salutations and acclaims. His sympathies and thoughts are with the young folks though and when he sees them pairing off, he halts the greetings quickly and signals his fellow musicians to be ready. With apparent satisfaction his glance rests on stalwart young August Delfosse<sup>2</sup> and he walks over to confront him.

"Bien Gustin! Why do you keep us waiting? Has your right arm lost its cunning or think you, you can still wield the flag baton?"

August blushes modestly and haltingly consents to try, and instantly an American flag appears, apparently from nowhere, and is thrust into his waiting hand. His bearing changes. He is no longer one of the merrymakers. He is their leader. His spine stiffens. He orders the young

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<sup>2</sup> This should probably be Jean B. Delfosse. August was not born until 1851.—H.R.H.

gallants to choose their partners for the first dance. Let me say here that that is one command that seems to me superfluous. If I am any judge at all, this had been done two hours ago. Again he commands, this time to attention and with a flourish of the flag the music starts and the dancers are off. There follow the many intricate figures of the dance with August signalling the changes in a penetrating bass. Coming down from the dim past they come to me only sketchily but I catch his "Grand rond! Chaines des dames! Quatres par quatres! A la main gauche! A la main drit! Les dames en avant! Les cavaliers a' la comptoir!"

I am interested in young Delfosse's technique as a conductor. With that first flourish of the flag, not once has the bunting drooped or wavered. Up and down, side to side, weaving numberless figures, always to the beat of the music it travels. It crackles and snaps with the vigor of his movements like shots from a pistol.

("I will always believe that August Delfosse never had an equal as flag man," said an old-timer. "He was a heavy-set man and used his tremendous energy in keeping that flag taut. It seems to me, as I look back, that he kept those dancers speeded up on his own vitality. When August called off, you knew you were dancing.")

The music ends and with much laughing and good-natured bantering, the crowd moves towards the improvised hall for the balance of the day's and evening's entertainment.

Not yet are these new settlers prepared for that second day of celebration, when the young men contend for a bridle prize or the girls run for handkerchiefs. It will be many years before the horse supplants the ox as beast of burden. "Courir la bride", they called the bridle race and many an old farm nag unwittingly jousted for his own ensnarement. Too early also was it for "Courir L'Poie", in which a live goose was the victim. The goose was anchored forty paces away from the contestant. Blindfolded and equipped with a scythe blade, the end of which was

wrapped in burlap, his task was to decapitate the goose. But wait; before he starts he is whirled around and, when released, the crowd gives him a wide berth because his sense of direction is blurred.

("They had to discontinue the goose hunt in windy weather," my informant adds. "A canny fellow discovered that no matter how balled up his sense of direction was, the direction of the wind was constant and he almost bankrupted the first kirmess in which he put his idea into practice.")

Late evening. The dancers reluctantly bid each other good bye and start on their long walks homeward. In single file, southwestward through the forest, travel young Amia and his wife Marie. They stride along silently, Amia deeply engrossed in thought. The kirmess was over. Were his troubles over too? He pondered how to broach the subject of health to his wife but he need not have worried. Refreshed in mind and body by the day of reunion and dancing, the young woman's practical mind was already looking forward to the morrow.

"Bien Amia," she says, "we have had our feast day and a pleasant time it has proven. The weather continues favorable but one must not tempt Providence. The oxen have rested too and to-morrow we must start early so that we may add new land to our tilled acres before the snow flies."

It was fortunate for Amia that the night was dark, else would his face have betrayed his great astonishment and joy. His mind moved rapidly framing a suitable reply.

When he did answer, it was only by great effort that he managed to keep out of his voice any hint of the elation that he felt. Quietly, with all the instinctive, accumulated wisdom of generations of benedicts, he merely grunted, "Bon"!

Another expression of Belgian sociability is the custom of planting the May pole. On the first day of May, after a hotly contested town election is disposed of, the electors come to do honor to the successful candidates. They bring

with them an immense pole, usually a balsam, with a tuft of green in the top and gaily ornamented with ribbons and streamers. After this is firmly planted at his front gate, they go to shake hands with the office holder who stands wreathed in smiles, hospitably dispensing refreshments, both wet and dry.

Another more serious custom is the church procession-al. There are several processions held during the year, the most important being the one in spring held just before Ascension Day. This is called Rogation Procession, so called because the participants are supposed to sing litanies of special supplication. The order of the procession is as follows: First comes the cross bearer in surplice and cassock bearing the cross. If the cross is not too big, this is carried by one of the acolytes of the altar. Then follow little girls in white strewing flowers on the highway. Then comes the priest wearing sacerdotal robes of dignity and carrying the blessed sacrament on a throne. He is followed by the choir singing hymns. Next come the women and finally the men. In former years the procession started from the church and proceeded to the nearest wayside chapel and then returned. The first generation of Belgians was very musical and often used to participate in the procession with diverse instruments on which were played many beautiful selections of sacred music. Now, on account of the increased traffic, the procession is confined to the cemetery, and there is very little instrumental music.

In different parts of the Belgian settlement may be seen little wayside shrines or chapels, although not as many as formerly, the new state and county highway construction having ruthlessly pushed some of them into oblivion. They are little places of prayer fitted out with an altar and

other sacred adornments built in propitiatory remembrance of a parent or departed relative. Here the neighbors go for a few minutes of quiet devotion, particularly in the month of May. Many are the loving and reverent touches given to these chapels by the women.

The French language or its Walloon dialect is even now, in the third and fourth generation, the general medium of communication, although very few can read French. But the Belgians read very little, finding their intellectual stimulus in social gatherings as stated above. They do not maintain many parochial schools, but are liberal in their appropriations to the common schools, conservatively believing that a moderate knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic is good for almost every one. Lately (1923) a high school department was added to the school in Brussels, the chief Belgian rural center, and many young people are delving into Physics and Mathematics to the mystified admiration of their elders. There are also each year quite a few young people who go to colleges and universities.

In politics as in religion and sociability the Belgians are a whole-souled people. Their forefathers had no vote in the old country (even now less than five per cent. of the people are electors), but here they have as much to say in the ballot box as the president of the bank, and this is a privilege they greatly appreciate. They are conservative in their expectations, and if a political leader has gained their support, they stand by him loyally. For this reason the Belgian settlement has continued a solid LaFollette stronghold. But although nominally Republicans, they are not hide-bound in their allegiance, and in the fall of 1932 they cast an overwhelming vote for a Democratic president. The town of Union gained wide publicity as being the largest



precinct in Wisconsin casting a unanimous vote for Roosevelt. This was because of their opposition to the prohibition amendment which they believe is an infringement of private liberty.

As already stated the Belgians are a particularly good-natured people. If treated with kindness and courtesy they are very hearty in response. But there is a stubborn side to their character which cannot be overcome with argument. This obstinacy often leads them into lawsuits. Two men will disagree about a trifle, and before long they will both have lawyers and their squabble will be rehearsed, diagnosed and settled before a whole courtroom of their neighbors, furnishing entertainment for a long time afterward.

But while the Belgians have their faults, they are on the whole a very good class of citizens. Their fathers did a splendid piece of work in conquering the wilderness, clearing the swamps and building up the settlement. Their sons are thrifty and home-loving, and land sells for a higher price among them than elsewhere in the county. They are also good business managers, and for a time the biggest mill on the Peninsula (the Chaudoir mill) was at Brussels. While somewhat suspicious of new ideas, they are progressive and liberal toward projects of recognized merit, such as good schools and highways, the church and worthy charitable enterprises. During the world war they were so generous in donating money for the children who were victims of the war in Belgium that a deputation from the fatherland was sent to Green Bay by the Belgian government to thank them. On July 3, 1917, thousands of Belgians went to the city to meet these distinguished officials who brought greetings from the old country. Flowers were strewn in their way by young people of the third and fourth generation, and a true Belgian jubilation followed.

**F. EDWARD DAEMS**

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REV. F. EDWARD Daems, whose portrait is printed as a frontispiece to this volume, was born near Diest, Belgium, August 26, 1826. He came to America in September, 1851, and for a few months assisted Father Vanden Broek at Little Chute, Wis. In May, 1852, he came to Bay Settlement to take charge of the Holy Cross congregation of the Catholic Church. He thus became the first resident clergyman on the Door Peninsula. A small log church had been built there by one of his itinerant predecessors. In June of the same year he and his parishioners began the erection of a large church which was soon finished and served the congregation for almost eighty years.

In the summer of 1853, when the first company of agricultural immigrants arrived from Belgium to Wisconsin, he was instrumental in causing them to settle on vacant lands in the vicinity of Bay Settlement. These first pioneers were quickly followed by a multitude of others. It is estimated that during the next four or five years about fifteen thousand Belgians settled in the timbered region east and northeast of Bay Settlement. To all of these many countrymen Father Daems was for a time pastor, friend and adviser. There were no roads, but he traveled around on foot, holding divine service in their log cabins, baptizing their children and burying their dead. He was also their only

doctor, being familiar with many medical remedies and thus eased many a bed of pain.

These visits of the cheerful, energetic young priest were the great festival days of the humble pioneers. There were no newspapers in their cabins, and very seldom came a letter, but he told them of what was happening in all his farflung parish, fifty miles long and ten miles wide. In that parish practically all were Belgians, coming largely from the same province—Brabant—and the news he had to tell was therefore of great interest. Weddings and funerals, the news from the old country or of new arrivals were usually first heard of through him. As he had a strong penchant for the humorous, these narratives were usually highly entertaining. He could also tell of how the people of this or that neighborhood were talking of building a church, which news was a powerful stimulus for the settlers in another district to follow their example.

In time these churches were built and the Belgian settlement changed from one large parish with Father Daems as the only priest into more than a dozen smaller ones, most of which have their own priests. The following is a list of the congregations with their churches, the members of which are almost exclusively Belgians, into which the original Holy Cross parish was subdivided:

Holy Cross, Bay Settlement, Brown County.

St. Hubert's, Sugar Bush, Brown County.

St. Peter & St. Pauls, Green Bay, Brown County.

St. Joseph's, Champion, Kewaunee County.

St. Martins, Tonet, Kewaunee County.

St. Amand's, Walhain, Kewaunee County.

St. Louis', Dyckesville, Kewaunee County.

St. Odile's, Thiry Daems, Kewaunee County.

St. Peter's, Lincoln, Kewaunee County.

St. Huberts, Rosiere, Door and Kewaunee Counties.

St. Francis de Paul, Marchand, Door and Kewaunee Counties.

St. Michael's, Misiere, Door County.

St. Mary's, Fairland, Door County.

St. Francis', Brussels, Door County.

There is also the Chapel of the Holy Virgin at Champion, Kewaunee County, which does not represent a separate congregation.

Finally there are a large number of Belgians on the outskirts of the settlement who are members of nearby churches whose membership is mixed.

The fate and fortunes of these many thousand Belgians were largely affected by the guiding influence of Father Daems in persuading them to settle where they did. No doubt their early pioneer struggles were made lighter by dwelling together in one large community with so many ties to bind them together. They have reason to feel grateful to his memory for he found them an excellent region to dwell in, and he spared no toil to help them.

Father Daems died at Bay Settlement February 12, 1879. For many years previously he was Vicar General of the Green Bay Diocese.

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