

# THE EARLY OUTPOSTS OF WISCONSIN.

*A Paper read before the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, December 26, 1872.*

## Annals of Prairie du Chien.

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The early history of this place and surrounding country, as compared with some others in this State is shrouded with uncertainty; while the section around Green Bay is known to have been inhabited by various Indian tribes as early as 1639, as ascertained by JEAN NICOLLET, who has the reputation of being the first white person who visited that region, the section of territory lying to the west and south west, was an unknown wilderness.

Father MARQUETTE is supposed to be the first white person who penetrated the territory of Wisconsin west of Green Bay. Passing up the Fox river with JOLIET, he crosses the portage of the Wisconsin, and passing down the latter stream entered the Mississippi June 17, 1673,—two hundred years ago the present year. He says "the river is narrow at the mouth of the Wisconsin, and the current slow and gentle; on the right is a considerable chain of very high mountains, (?), (Maj. PIKE says 550 feet above the water,) and on the left, very fine lands. It is, in many places, studded with islands; he found ten fathoms of water—its breadth very unequal, sometimes three-quarters of a league and sometimes narrows to three arpents or two hundred and twenty yards." He did not stop but proceeded on his journey South, and as the prairie lying above the junction of the two rivers was very probably hid by the timber on the bottoms, it is doubtful if he ascended to it. He saw no Indians in the vicinity and there was no appearance of villages or settlements. This is the first account we have of the

region known as the "Prairie du Chien country."

1680. The next explorer of Wisconsin and the upper Mississippi was Father LOUIS HENNEPIN, who accompanied LA SALLE and his party in his expedition to explore the Mississippi. He was sent up the river by LASALLE to the country of the Sioux and discovered the Falls of St. Anthony; he was taken prisoner but was afterward released by Frenchmen arrived from Canada. On his return, he stopped near the mouth of the Wisconsin to smoke some meat, probably not far from the present city. He found no Indians living there, nor any traders. He then passed up the Wisconsin for Green Bay.

1681-89. The exact time at which a military post was established at Prairie du Chien, has been the subject of much speculation, some putting it as late as 1775, while it is stated in a report of a committee of Congress, to have occurred in 1755, which was the year following the reconciliation of the French and Sacs and Foxes. The latter date may be the correct one, as the French surrendered Canada to the English in 1760; but it is very evident that there must have been a post at a much earlier date, at or near the Prairie. The evidence of this early occupation is found in the official document of the taking possession of the Mississippi Valley in the name of the French King, by "NICHOLAS PERROT, commanding at the post of the Naudouesieux" at the post of St. Anthony, May 8, 1689, "to which documents