

Early Settlement of La Crosse and Monroe Counties

By Morrison McMillan, of Sparta

In giving a brief account of the early settlement of La Crosse and Monroe counties, we find the principal events keeping even pace with the rapid improvements of this fast age. The present site of the City of La Crosse, seems to have been a favorite resort of the aborigines of our country, from time immemorial; the La Crosse and Black rivers joining the great Father of Waters at this point, on the east, and Root River on the west, giving them easy access, by means of their canoes, to this locality. This seems to have been a neutral ground, where the different tribes met for pastime, and engaged in various sportive games; the beautiful and majestic scenery of the surrounding country must have furnished quite a zest to their sports. The name of La Crosse is said to have been given to the place by a favorite game in which they generally engaged.

This induced several French traders, at an early day, to meet them here for the purpose of trade; but no regular trading post was established before the year 1840. At this time, a man by the name of La Batt opened an establishment, one mile below the present city; but he did not remain long. The first permanent establishment was by Nathan Myrick, who brought from Prairie du Chien, a small lot of goods, in the fall of 1841. The next year he associated with him J. B. Miller; and then went East, bringing back an amiable wife, and their oldest son was the first white child born in the county of La Crosse, or that portion of country bounded on the west by the Mississippi,