

Early Exploration and Settlement of Juneau County

By John T. Kingston

In the fall of 1836, Samuel B. Pilkington and the writer, the former a native of Ireland, while at Helena, on the Wisconsin River, heard of a very extensive forest of pine timber and a splendid water power on the Lemonweir River, about twelve miles from the mouth. As the Winnebago Indians had just sold their lands on the south side of that river to the government, we conceived the idea of making an exploration in that direction to ascertain the truth of those reports, intending, if matters were found as represented to engage in the lumber business; but not then being just ready to make the trip, we concluded to wait until the next year.

Accordingly, in the month of December in the following year, 1837, we packed our Indian pony and started from Racine to explore the valley in question. Our outfit consisted of a Mackinaw blanket and butcher knife, an axe, a box of matches and provisions for a week, besides the necessary camp fixtures, including a small fly tent. Fire arms and ammunition we considered of no particular use, and carried none.

We found but few settlers after crossing Fox River, thirty miles west of Racine, two or three at Spring Prairie, Luke Taylor and one or two others on Turtle Creek, near the present location of Delavan, a Mr. Johnson on the east edge of Rock Prairie, and Mr. Henry F. Janes living in a log house on the east bank of Rock River, near the present site of the city of Janesville. From Rock River to the Four Lakes, now Madison, no signs of the white man; but only a blazed line of trees indicating the road to the future capital of the State.

There being six or eight inches of snow on the ground, we did