

The Battle of Peckatonica¹

By Matthew G. Fitch

The morning of the 17th² of June, 1832, was one of peculiar loveliness, even in that fertile region known at that time as the Upper Mississippi Lead Mines, now as Wisconsin—although owing to our northern latitude, being 43 deg., vegetation does not spring up early; yet nature has amply atoned for this by filling the small groves that dot the prairie at every turn of the eye, with myriads of the sweetest songsters of the feathered tribe—while the prairie, covered with thousands of the most beautiful flowers, many of which rank among the botanical collections of Europe, but which here, growing wild, fill the air with an odor that brings fancy almost into a belief that these are the Elysian fields by ancient sages foretold.

But notwithstanding the beauties of nature, the soul of man was ill at ease. The Sauks, a powerful and warlike band of savages, who inhabit the west side of the Mississippi, had crossed the river and commenced a bloody and inhuman war on all those that chance threw in their way. Many were the instances, from the hoary head of age down to the babe that hung fondly to the mother's breast, that felt the deadly blow of these savage monsters; and, as if death could not atone for former existence, after removing the scalp, they would proceed to cut the inanimate corpses in a manner that baffles all description.

Three battles had already been fought—and as often had our troops been forced to retreat, with loss of men, horses, etc. But as yet, the horrors of war had not immediately visited the mining region—the Sauks having contented

¹ From the *Madison Express*, Jan. 9, 1841.

² This is clearly an error of memory. Col. Dodge's official report of the battle, dated the day of its occurrence, June 16th, 1832, is given in Smith's *Hist. of Wisconsin*, iii, pp. 226-27. L. C. D.