

the population of Dane County at that time. Between the lake and Belle Fountaine—a name we gave the place—we spent some time resting ourselves and horses.

We considered the country utterly worthless, and thought it would never be settled, except that there might be a settlement sometime at Blue Mounds, and one at Platte Mounds, and perhaps a small settlement at the Four Lakes—could we have been assured at that time, that we would live to see the whole country thickly settled, with a large city and a State capital at the Four Lakes, we should have promised ourselves a lifetime of, at least, three centuries. The country was wild and desolate enough, no whistling locomotives, lowing herds, singing milkmaids, tolling church bells, rattling vehicles, ringing anvils, busy mills, or whistling plow-boys, then; the wildcat and wolf roamed at large over prairie and forest in search of food, unmolested by the rifle's sharp ring; the oriole, the nut-hatch, the robin, the bullfinch, and the thrush flitted from tree to tree, sang their songs, built their nests and reared their young; and the white man's voice had not joined with theirs in singing praise to Him who caused the waters to gather themselves together, and the dry land to appear.

After several days' rambling around through this section, we resumed our march toward Fort Winnebago. We found the whole Winnebago tribe of Indians encamped, I think, on the ground now occupied by Portage City. The settlement there consisted of those in the fort, and one man without, who kept a bakery for the accommodation of the garrison. The local currency used was common playing cards, cut in strips, issued by the baker with his name written on the back—every spot good for one shilling or a loaf of bread. If it was not quite a specie paying bank, bread—the staff of life—was always paid on demand.

After leaving Winnebago, we followed the Wisconsin to Helena, keeping between the river and bluff, not a house, or any sign of civilization, did we see on the route. The town of Helena, on the Wisconsin River, consisted of ten or fifteen houses; but was entirely deserted, except two men.