

THE WISCONSIN WINNEBAGOES.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MOSES PAQUETTE, BY THE EDITOR.¹

I was born on the fourth of March, 1828, in the dwelling occupied by my father, Pierre Paquette, near the old agency house,² which latter is still standing on the bank of the Fox river at Portage. Besides this dwelling, my father, who was employed by the American Fur Company, had a trading house and barracks for the five or six men whom he then engaged in the business of portaging boats across the almost two miles of marsh which here separate the Fox and Wisconsin rivers. Boats coming up the Fox would be beached at a point near the mouth of the present canal.

¹ March 25, 1887, I started from Madison with Moses Paquette, government interpreter for the Wisconsin Winnebagoes, to visit Spoon Decorah and other head men of the tribe in Adams county. Our expedition closed at Portage, March 30. What information I was able to obtain from Paquette, in conversations during our trip, I have formulated into a continuous narrative, following his manner of expression as closely as practicable. The prepared *MS.* I carefully read over to him on the eighteenth of May following at Black River Falls, and made such changes as he suggested. As it is now printed, it received his approval. I found Paquette an earnest, truthful man, and bearing an excellent reputation as such in his community and among the Winnebagoes. To the latter, he is a counsellor and friend, arbitrating their little disputes as far as possible, offering them advice, and acting as their spokesman on many occasions; all of which he does out of pure good nature and at much sacrifice of time and convenience, for the government merely grants him a per diem for attendance on the payment of annuities. He is a familiar figure on the streets of Black River Falls, every Saturday, when he may be seen throughout the day surrounded by groups of Indians who look up to him as an oracle,—and the son of an oracle, for his father, Pierre Paquette, was long a power among the Winnebagoes. His influence among these simple people seems always for the best.—ED.

² See diagram of Ft. Winnebago in 1835, *Hist. Columbia Co.* (West. Hist. Co., 1881), p. 342, and frontispiece.—ED.