

In 1841, the Rev. Leonard Hemenway Wheeler and wife, Rev. Woodbridge L. James and wife, and Miss Abigail Spooner, came to the La Pointe mission. Mr. and Mrs. James did not long remain. Miss Spooner rendered years of service. It is no disparagement to the other laborers there to say that Mr. Wheeler is the first among equals. "It is safe to say," writes Dr. Edwin Ellis, now county judge of Ashland county, who personally knew him, "that no man was ever more thoroughly devoted to the work of rescuing the Indians from barbarism, and vice, and degradation, than was Mr. Wheeler. His primary object was to preach Christ, but he saw clearly that the Indian must be civilized or exterminated." Mr. Wheeler, believing that for Indians — and white men as well — industry is a necessary part of Christianity, determined to found an agricultural settlement. This he established on the Mushkeezeebi, or Bad river (literally the Marsh river), and named Odanah, an Ojibway word meaning "village." Thither he removed the first day of May, 1845. Mr. Hall remained at La Pointe until 1853, when he removed to Crow Wing on the Mississippi. Before the latter date, Mr. Ayer also had removed to Minnesota, where he became a member of the convention that framed the present constitution of that state.

Among the Indians in the settlement at Odanah, Mr. Wheeler established civil government. He aided in the same service among the whites, holding, after La Pointe county was organized, various offices which increased his responsibilities rather than his income. Nor did he forget the spiritual needs of the whites. He was the first to preach at Ashland, and probably at Bayfield also. "Amid all the trials and discouragements of Ashland's early settlers, he was ever ready to offer words of encouragement and cheer. In its darkest periods he prophesied of Ashland's final success, and his words of cheer were influential in inducing some of us to hold on when otherwise we should have given up in despair. He was a frequent visitor among us in those early days, and his social influence was purifying and ennobling. He participated in the first public celebration ever held in Ashland, July 4,