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IN A HUNDRED BUSY YEARS A COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHES MUCH
As It Was in the Beginning
How Courage and Purpose Compounded to Build Beloit

By MASON H. DOBSON

It is the year of our Lord 1836; of American independence, the 60th; and of the coming of the colonizer to the confluence of the Rock and the Turtle rivers, the first.

George Washington, the father of a new nation created out of courage and conflict, is 37 years in his tomb where Mount Vernon's lovely lawns overlook the Potomac.

Andrew Jackson, seventh president, nears the end of his occupancy of the White House and thinks of happy retirement at his Hermitage near Nashville in Tennessee, where he and his beloved Rachel will doze and smoke their pipes beside the great fireplace, and live again in remembrance the lusty border days when the duello settled disputes and there was none quicker to avenge a slight than Old Hickory himself.

Soon death will find him at his Hermitage and he will rest beneath the trees on the hill that he called home, a border hero and a hero to all borderers. A brave man, too, as border heroes must be in that and all other generations.

There is much talk in the Sangamon country and at New Salem, Ill., of young Abe Lincoln. He is 27 years old and has been rail-splitter, surveyor, storekeeper, postmaster, and for a brief time, only four years before, a captain of volunteers in the Blackhawk War.

Now he is a lawyer and member of the legislature. He has the gift of narrative, homely and robust narrative. Folks in Vandalia and Springfield begin to pay him some attention. They laugh at his stories and they like him immensely.

In 10 years he will be in Congress and in 25 years in the White House.

It is 22 years since the young United States fought England for freedom of the seas, just as today it is 22 years since murder at Sarajevo loosed a drenching flood of blood in the World War.

This year of 1836, Texas, hitherto a province of Mexico, declares her independence and becomes a republic admitting allegiance neither to Mexico or the United States. Soon much will be heard of Sam Houston, Crockett, Bowie and the Alamo.

There are in all the United States fewer than 15,000,000 people — not many more than today live in the state of New York — and it worries the more settled east because so many of these 15,000,000 already have crossed the Alleghenies to settle upon free lands in the vast territory drained by the Mississippi. It seems to these worried and established easterners that most of those who are not already west of the Alleghenies are even now planning to go, because the great westward movement is upon everyone's tongue and in everyone's thoughts.

It is no small journey, either. For the Mississippi is weeks removed from the Atlantic seaboard and the hills of New Hampshire instead of hours, as now. There are no broad highways that lead there, nor railroads. Not even New York and Philadelphia are connected by a railroad in this year of 1836, and it will be 15 years before the rails are laid west from Baltimore as far as Wheeling, West Virginia.

But they are dauntless men who leave such security as they have in New England's hills and towns to journey westward. And they are dauntless women who bid their kinfolk goodbye to travel westward with their men.

The west is wide, the west is free, in this year of 1836.

There are avanii awaiting the plow, with no horrible crop of granite to be garnered by back-break before the steel can turn a furrow.
and there are streams to turn the waterwheels that saw the lumber and grind the meal. There are fish and there is game for food until the first crop can be harvested.

There is opportunity.
Opportunity!
The word is a trumpet note that will not let the man in the hills of New England have any rest at all. It is with him in his rocky fields, in his home at evening, when he talks with his neighbor, while he sits in his pew at church.

He is obsessed by it. And while his obsession grows, his women folk begin to think of the pitifully few possessions which they will shortly pack, and of the many things which they must leave behind—for soon they will be on the move by wagon and barge and boat for the west where they will live the years that are left to them.

The East Which They Left

- What is the east which these men and women are quitting?

Well, it is an east that has fought two wars—one a war of independence, the other a war to drive home and rivet tight the full meaning of that independence by establishing the freedom of American commerce and shipping upon the seven seas and wherever else hard-handed shipmasters from New Bedford, Salem, Bucksport, Gloucester, Boston, New York and Newburyport might take them.

Between the first and second wars—the Revolution and the War of 1812—two major pursuits occupied the people of the nation. They were agriculture and commerce. Commerce largely consisted of exporting to Europe the things which Europe needed and of which we had a surplus, and the importation from Europe of the things we needed but did not manufacture; plus, of course, the buying and selling among ourselves of the products of farm and countryside.

Agriculture produced the necessities of life for the vast majority of the nation's 7,200,000 people in 1810. Out of the soil came food, and on its pasture lands grazed the sheep that furnished the wool which the womenfolk cleaned and carded, which they spun into yarn and wove into cloth. From wool to cloth, it was a household industry.

There were no factories in the United States between those two wars. Indeed, there were hardly any factories anywhere; but the beginnings of the factory system had developed in England, where in 1785 the Rev. Richard Cartwright invented the spinning Jenny—an invention destined to revolutionize a world.

In 1793 an American—Eli Whitney— Invented the cotton gin. Before Whitney a slave in the deep south could clean five or six pounds of cotton a day. After Whitney the same slave could clean 300 pounds, and by that fact became 50 times more valuable to his master.

These two inventions—one of which speeded up the production of cotton, and the other of which brought constantly more demand for the cotton thus produced—established the factory system in the world on the one hand, and on the other created in the United States a problem which was to be settled by four ghastly years of war. It was the problem of slavery and its twin, secession.

For slavery, which seemed not to be making great headway before, became suddenly of tremendous economic importance in the south by reason of Cartwright and Whitney.

The first factory was built in the United States in 1814. It was a cotton mill at Waltham, Mass. It had 1700 spindles built on the Cartwright power loom plan and it was operated by water power. It revolutionized the textile industry in this country. Cotton cloth, which was 40 cents a yard in 1815, dropped to 8 cents in 1829. Thus the factory system came to the United States. The machine was beginning its mastery.

A factory system was needed, too, and encouraged. For the War of 1812 had cut off all foreign imports, and Americans must now make for themselves the things they formerly bought from Europe. Then came peace. Commerce was reopened. And infant American industry was confronted with competition from abroad. A tariff—the first American tariff—was a consequence of this. It was enacted in 1816 and the items upon which it imposed a tariff to protect the American manufacturers were these: cotton, woolen goods, leather, hats, paper, sugar and salt.

Now Americans had three major pursuits—agriculture, commerce, and industry, important in the order named. But they had also what amounted almost to a fourth major pursuit more engrossing than all the rest—speculation.

A hundred years later there was another orgy of speculation; but by comparison it was no such speculation as that which followed the depression which marked the peace of 1814, and from then until 1836.

That orgy had its origins in land—land that was fruitful and free for the taking—in railroads and canals and turnpikes; in all the methods and modes by which a restless people can journey from east to west. There was speculation in the new factories, too, but to a lesser extent. Principally it was land—western land—that occasioned the recklessness.

No sooner had the Revolution ended when the first movement westward in numbers began crossing the Alleghanies to possess the land which the government either gave to them or sold for next to nothing. The forerunners of the movement were followed by others in constantly increasing numbers. To these the forerunners sold their land at a handsome profit and moved on to a new frontier to possess another piece of land. This they sold when the next wave of migration caught them up. At a profit. They moved often; they profited often. So land was desirable because it was gold, quick gold.

These pioneers must come west by any means they could find. By wagon train, which was slow. By canal boat, after the opening of the Erie in 1825. With sailing ship on the Great Lakes. By barge and flatboat and finally by steamship on the Ohio. And, at long last, by the railroad.

They were all in a very great hurry, as though their lives depended upon getting west at once and getting rich. So, if men could borrow money to build a toll turnpike to speed the migration; if they could sell bonds to build a canal to float emigrants' barges; if they could borrow what was required to lay rails and buy a locomotive—if they could do any or all of these things, they stood in the way of quick riches.

If they could get from the bank enough to buy a thousand acres or ten thousand acres at a few cents or a dollar an acre, surely they could sell the acres at a huge profit as the new turnpikes, the new canals, and the projected railroads speeded the emigrants westward.

They could even lay out townships on rivers and creeks, and mark the metes and bounds of business blocks, and draw upon the public lots pictures of puffing engines hauling long trains of loaded cars into such "paper" towns—all engraved upon proper plats.

So nearly everybody borrowed and bought and invested; and it amounted to speculation to all except such as were coming west to build homes and till the soil and live until they died. And with many such it was speculation, too.

Men speculated. Banks speculated. States speculated. But the movement to the west did not slacken. It in-

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creased. It brought statehood to Kentucky in 1792, to Tennessee in 1796, to Ohio in 1803. By 1810 a million people were west of the Alleghenies—one-seventh of all the people in the United States. From 1810 to 1820 the number doubled, partly because William Henry Harrison won a victory at Tippecanoe and opened the way for the settlement of the prairies of Indiana and Illinois, which became states in 1816 and 1818 respectively.

So much money was borrowed and so many roads and canals and railroads were projected that the total debt of the state governments, which was $13,000,000 in 1820, was upwards of $200,000,000 in 1836.

No one knows how much money was privately borrowed and owed. It couldn’t last. And one of the reasons it didn’t—though it must have fallen of its own weight eventually—was that Andrew Jackson, who kept a promise when he made it, fulfilled one of the pledges of his 1832 presidential campaign. He said he would abolish the Bank of the United States and he did.

That meant withdrawal of all federal moneys from the central federal bank. When these were withdrawn the bank had to call its loans, ten million dollars of them. Banks—most of which had issued specie notes used in lieu of currency—failed right and left. The government suspended specie payment for federal lands; it would no longer take the notes, but demanded gold or silver. Of this there was not enough.

Misery overtook the speculator and there were many of him. His loans were called. He had no money and could get none. He failed, by the hundreds of thousands. There was a money famine and this year of 1836 saw the nation well into what in 1837 became the most horrible panic in American history. For in that day there was no one to turn to for aid; the government least of all.

That is the east in 1836.

The West Which Awaits Them

• Here where Turtle creek flows into Rock river there was one log cabin in 1836. It stood near the present intersection of State street and Shirland avenue in a grove of trees. It was the home of the French Canadian, Joseph Thibault (also spelled by some, Thibaut, or Thibeau, but pronounced as Tebo). Thibault’s menage included two Indian wives, one perhaps 40, the other about 18 and the mother of an infant. She was a half-breed, light in complexion and attractive. There was also a son of Thibault by his marriage with a squaw-wife who had died some years before. He was an upstanding youth about 17 years old. He spoke English well, French fluently, and three Indian tribal languages.

Thibault had been about 12 years hereabouts buying furs from the Indian trappers and hunters and selling them to Solomon Juneau at Milwaukee or John Kenzie at Chicago. He was in this region when Blackhawk’s fleeing band of 800 passed through the Rock river valley in 1832 with General Atkinson’s regulars and volunteers in pursuit, and he was a man of influence or imagination or both, because he told a land-prospector in 1836 that he and General Scott “made the treaty” at Rock Island that ended the Blackhawk War. (Wis. Historical Collections, Vol. 6).

Until that war there had been many Indian villages in this area. Turtle Village, on the bluffs where Hillcrest is now, had a population of 600 Winnebagoes living in 35 great lodges in 1829, and their corn fields covered the creek flats below. White Crow was the tribal leader and village chief, and Whirling Thunder and Old Soldier were also chieftains and men of importance among the Rock River Winnebagoes. In treaties with the whites White Crow was the spokesman for his people.

To the territorial governor, Cass, at Prairie du Chien, in 1828, he said: “Father, since I have known good from evil no white man can say I have done him harm. I speak before the Great Spirit who knows what I say. I hold you fast by the hand.” And he was also a diplomat. Striving to protect the villages and their cornfields of his Winnebagoes from the encroachment of the white settler, he prefaced a speech before Governor Cass: “Father, you who are before us, we look upon as we do the Great Spirit. He has placed a pen in your hand; he has made your skin white. But he has made us red, poor, an object of pity.” Surely that might have softened the governor.

But White Crow could also be severe. He did not cringe or attempt diplomacy in 1832 at Fort Winnebago when Gov. Porter demanded that the Winnebagoes surrender to the whites the members of their tribe who had aided the Sac and Foxes in the Blackhawk War. He stood before the white council and said: “We thought it was only us who were foolish and could tell lies; but I find that some of you whites are as good at it as many of our young men. Many of the whites are as bad as we are. They took our corn and many articles as they passed our villages, and have even taken up the dead that were buried and took off their blankets in which they were wrapped.” Thus White Crow rebuked the whites and gave his opinion of General Atkinson’s foragers.

A little idealized, perhaps, but interesting is this woodcut from an early Harper’s Weekly. Prior to the coming of the railroad in 1857 many a Beloit-to-be had his first glimpse of his future home from the deck of a Frink & Walker stage coach; and helped, also, to pry their wheels from the muck of frontier roads in spring and autumns. Frink & Walker operated a regular schedule between Beloit and Chicago, with an overnight stop en route.
On Lake Koshkonong once were several large Winnebago villages. Where the Pecatonica river flows into the Rock there were both Winnebago and Potawatomi villages, and there Stephen Mack was the arbiter in their quarrels and often kept them from bloodshed. Along Sugar River were several villages. Where Brodhead is now there were nine lodges and 167 Indians. There was a village at the mouth of the Catfish river and another, Big Rock Village, at Janesville. Between Beloit and Janesville was Standing Post Village, whose chief was Coming Lightning.

Among these Indians Thibault traded and got his furs prior to 1832, but treaties which closed the Blackhawk War moved the red men gradually west of the Mississippi and there were not many here in 1836. Thibault’s business was falling off. Whirling Thunder had led his Turtle Village band away from the creek bluffs; the Indian had surrendered to the white man the Rock river valley that he loved and that had been his home for generations. But the Indian never forgot the valley. Some resisted eviction until they were forcibly removed; others, in roving bands, returned from their new homes west of the Mississippi each year to revisit the home of their ancestors.

Early Beloiters—even as late as 1865—saw these pitiful bands travel the old, old trails their forefathers had known along the river, watched them make their camps, and saw the tribal elders point out to the young men the ancient village sites and cornfields and burial places, and heard them tell in words they could not understand the story of the Indian’s lost heritage.

The Blackhawk War was the tragic end of the Indian occupation of the Rock river valley. Not only were his villages marauded and his cornfields ruined so that hunger brought him to starvation, but there went with the white man as he returned to his home in Illinois and Indiana and elsewhere fabulous stories of the woods and fields and streams awaiting the settler. So the Indian must move out as the settler moved in.

Probably Joseph Thibault liked this state of affairs no better than the Indian and was willing to move along himself when now and then a prospecting land-hunter stopped overnight at his cabin. One such land-hunter was Caleb Blodgett, with his son, Nelson, who came this way one day in the autumn of 1835. They were from Meacham’s Grove, outside Chicago, where the returning Blackhawk War veteran had told them of Turtle Village and the rich land at the confluence of Turtle Creek and Rock river.

Caleb Blodgett was Vermont born in 1785. The west was in his blood early. When a young man he turned toward the frontier of that time. It was western New York state. He found work there and land—government land which could be had for little except hard work. When he had his land he returned to Randolph, Vermont, to marry Chloe Kidder and to bring her to his new home. His young brother-in-law, Selv Kidder, accompanied them. The community they helped to establish in New York state was the village of Alexander. Several years in Alexander brought a new westward urge to Caleb Blodgett. So he and his wife and several small Blodgetts journeyed west once more by wagon. In Conneaut, Ohio, they found the opportunity Caleb sought. Here he acquired much land, became the proprietor of a hotel, held a mail contract, and owned and operated a chain of stage routes. His son, Selvy, was a young man now and could manage the big store his father started. The Blodgett interests were “big business” in pioneer Ohio, but in the end fire destroyed his buildings, made him all but financially bankrupt, and gave him the best of reasons to move westward once more.

So the Blodgetts set out for Chicago to recoup their fortunes.

Chicago didn’t appeal to him. It was a swamp in which a handful of shanties had been built. Speculators were holding the land and Caleb Blodgett was no man to pay the speculator’s price when he could move on and get land at the pioneer’s price. So he and his family continued on to Meacham’s Grove where they settled. They built a log house, plowed the land and put in crops. There the Blackhawk veterans stopped on their way to their southern Illinois and Indiana homes and described the
Turtle and the Rock where land was free, or practically so, and where the first man to settle would be the man to establish a new town, perhaps, and there would be profit and honor.

That is why Caleb Blodgett and his son, Nelson, "prospected" here in late 1835, and why, in 1836, they came again, with two yoke of oxen, a wagon, plows, and other tools, intending to stay, because they liked what they had seen the year before. They talked again to Joseph Thibault in his 16 by 12 log house and they found him unhappy. His Indians had gone from Turtle Village. There were few furs to buy. He had no hankering for land, had Joseph Thibault, and a town was the last thing he wanted to see. He, too, would move.

So he probably smiled shrewdly when Caleb Blodgett offered him $200 (some say $250, others $500) for what land this French Canadian claimed to own; of which, of course, he really owned none. First it had been the Indian's land, then the government's. It was still the government's. But Thibault had been the first white man to live upon it any length of time and he possessed whatever right to the land a first occupant possesses. Blodgett knew this and was glad to give him legal tender to acquire what claims of ownership he might possibly have. And Thibault was glad to take the money. He was moving anyway. He did, and died mysteriously at Thibault's Point (named for him) on Lake Koshkonong the next winter. Many think he was murdered and thrust through the ice into the lake. His body never was found. Suspicion lodged upon his young squaw-wife and his grown son, who shortly followed the Indians west of the Mississippi and came no more to the Rock.

Neither Thibault nor Blodgett knew how much land was transferred in the transaction. Thibault said it was "three lots" of land, however much that might be. Blodgett thought it approximated 7,000 acres. It didn't much matter, because Thibault was out and Blodgett was now first upon the ground with a claim that could be submitted to the United States government when the land was thrown open at government sale. It was Beloit's first real estate transfer and both parties were satisfied.

One of the first things Caleb Blodgett did was to turn a furrow around a hundred acres or more of his new land to make an improvement upon it that was legal and substantial in the eyes of the government.

Then he brought his family from Meacham's Grove to Thibault's cabin where they lived while a new log house was being erected near the east bank of Rock river. The first Beloters were here to stay.

Coos County Colonizers

- In Coos county, New Hampshire, the hills are high and very beautiful. Where Colebrook's one main street sprawls beside the lovely Connecticut river that separates New Hampshire from Vermont, there is not much land that is level to the plow. The fields and pastures climb the hillsides. The rocks that once covered the land are pleasant fences now, but once that was so and farmers worked at back-break drudgery to make their fields. And the fields were small, too small for wheat and corn acres, and too hard to work, too, if your mind is full of the broad acres awaiting the plow in the free west of 1836.

In one of the pleasant white houses on Colebrook's main street at that time lived Dr. Horace White. He was not yet 30; young and vigorous and ambitions for opportunity, and just a little weary of the sameness of Colebrook, which was in 1836 much as it was in 1800, and is not so different, as a matter of fact, today.

Dr. White and his neighbors were talking of the west, as who in the east was not? From his office, which was in a room of his home, he could see Mt. Monadock, Toad Hill, Little Averill Mountain, Canaan Hill, and to the north the Hereford Mountains. Hills everywhere, it seemed. They made stories of the western prairies doubly interesting and attractive. One day they would miss those hills of New Hampshire terribly; but in 1836 they thought only of the prairies.

One day in October, 1836, while Caleb Blodgett and his sons and his wife and his son-in-law, John Hackett, and the latter's wife, were building a log home in what is now Beloit, Dr. White and some of his neighbors met in Colebrook to discuss the west. Several had already decided to move. The question with them was how and when. Then others became interested and the idea of a Colebrook colony in the west was born. If enough should be interested, there might be transplanted to the west a large bit of Colebrook and New England. The idea was attractive.

Present at the meeting were Dr. White; Captain John W. Bicknell, a former ship captain in the China trade and later a hotel keeper in Vermont across the river; Captain Bicknell's sons, Dr. George W. Bicknell, Edwin Bicknell, and Otis P. Bicknell; Otis Bicknell's brother-in-law, Robert P. Crane; Horace Hobart, David J. Bundy, Heman Beach, Ira Young, Asahel B. Howe and Albert Field. The New England Emigrating Company was organized and Dr. White was elected its agent to find a location in the west. The company would furnish him a horse and equipment for travel, his traveling expenses, and $100 a month for his services; and he would find for the company a new home. He was directed to visit northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin and eastern Iowa. He should acquire somewhere in that area land enough for all the colony.

Of those at the first meeting only Edwin Bicknell did not join the colonizing company, and within a few days several who were not present joined. These were Cyrus Eames, Deacon Peter Field, Samuel G. Colley, Eleanore Crane and Leonard Hatch. The company now comprised 16 men, most of them married and heads of families. The 16 assessed themselves $20 each to launch Dr. White upon his travels.

But before Dr. White could make arrangements to leave, two of the company who had decided definitely to come west, started on a prospecting tour of their own. They were Robert P. Crane and Otis P. Bicknell. Driving a team hitched to a two-horse wagon, they left Colebrook Oct. 24, 1836. It was cold and they were delayed by breakdowns but in four days they reached Burlington, Vt., and then traveled by boat to Troy, N. Y., thence by Erie canal barge to Buffalo and by the steamer United States to Detroit, which they reached on Nov. 8. Here they hired a farmer to take them by wagon to Ann Arbor where Crane had an uncle, and where the two Colebrook men worked at building a house until Jan. 16, 1837.

Here they were joined by Dr. White.
who had driven alone in the company sleigh all the way from Colebrook, crossing the Niagara river into Canada near Buffalo and following the north shore of Lake Erie to Detroit. On the 27th Dr. White and Bicknell started by sleigh for Chicago and on Feb. 14 Crane said goodbye to his relatives and started the same route afoot. Dr. White left Bicknell at Calumet, III., where another Colebrook man, Charles Messer (later a Beloit) was selling to the Pottowatomi Indian trade, to await Crane while he drove on alone to prospect. Crane and Bicknell then proceeded to Chicago, and on Feb. 27 started afoot with packs on their shoulders for Rockford. They tramped in a blinding snowstorm to Des Plaines. Between Chicago and Des Plaines there were no houses and they saw no one. After six days they reached Rockford to settle. While there they found another Colebrook man, Harvey Bundy, who was a clerk in George Goodhue’s trading post. Besides the Goodhue store, Rockford consisted of two log houses, a board shanty, a new sawmill and two two-story houses intended for hotels.

Dr. White, meantime, had been by sleigh as far south as Quincy, Ill., west into Iowa, and as far north in Iowa as Dubuque. He also had been as far north in Wisconsin as Turtle, where he met Caleb Blodgett. He saw Blodgett at George Goodhue’s request. Goodhue was promoting Turtle and Blodgett’s settlement; he already was interested with Blodgett in the erection of a sawmill, and he wanted colonists.

Dr. White liked Turtle but he hesitated to make a final selection for the New England Company and so he tarried to await Crane and Bicknell who, he thought, might help him make the decision, and who reached the Blodgett settlement on March 9, 1837. On their way they passed through Roscoe (three log cabins) and saw Squire Robert Cross at the bend of the river and Mr. Bird at Dry Run. At Rockton they found Thomas and Sylvester Talcott in their cabin, and also the cabin of Stephen Mack and Ho-No-Ne-Gah, his Indian wife. Mack had been there since 1822. Turtle creek was raging, as it has often since, when Crane and Bicknell reached it and they hailed for help until Joseph Thibault’s half-breed son came in his canoe to ferry them.

There were two habitations here then, Joseph Thibault’s log cabin and Caleb Blodgett’s log house. The Blodgett cabin had two rooms, with a chimney at the center partition serving a huge fire-place in each room. One room, the larger, served as living quarters for the family. It was a large family circle in the Blodgett cabin. It comprised Mr. and Mrs. Caleb Blodgett; their daughter and son-in-law, John and Cordelia Blodgett Hackett; and six sons, Daniel, Tyler, Nelson, a Edgar (aged 5 years), Brainerd and Andrew. Another son, Selvy K., was not here that first winter but, with his wife and son, came in 1838; and the two younger daughters, Sarepta and Orinda, were left in school in Ohio and did not come until later. Still another son, Edwin, had died in infancy. Very likely it was a full room, but it served for pioneers until a better home could be built.

The other room was “office,” dining room and sleeping room for land-hunters such as Crane and Bicknell and others like them, and for millhands, land-breakers, travelers, etc., until in the summer of 1837—the Blodgett and Goodhue sawmill then being in operation—Caleb Blodgett began construction of a two-story frame house.

In the Blodgett “spare” room Bicknell and Crane lodged—the rate $3 per week—until March 13 when Dr. White came up from Rockford to consult them in the important decision he must make. While waiting for Dr. White the two New Hampshirites turned a helping hand to the workmen building the Blodgett-Goodhue sawmill and digging the mill race which diverted Turtle creek to turn the new wheel. There was trouble with the flame and the creek waters broke through or overflowed, making a swamp from the race-way (near where South Race Street is now) almost as far north as what is now East Grand avenue. But when Dr. White arrived, the three New England Company members began an inspection of the countryside. They walked to the Bluff (perhaps where the college campus now is) to survey the scene. It was a pretty scene—woods and prairie, swift-flowing water that would be clean and uncontaminated, and high ground on the bluffs.

The three thought Caleb Blodgett’s land approximated 20,000 acres and they inspected much of it. They went five miles north from the present state line, three miles south, east three to five miles, and all of it was good in their eyes. If Dr. White needed urging, Crane and Bicknell furnished it. Among them they decided here would be the home of the New England Company if an interest in the Blodgett claim could be purchased at a proper price. This was soon attended to. For the sum of $2,500 Caleb Blodgett would sell them a one-third interest in his entire claim of “three looks” of Thibault’s prior claim, the money to be paid in installments “with the understanding, however, that a tract of land one mile square should be reserved from farming purposes and placed for a village, the same to be owned by each part company on individuals interested in the original claim and the lots to be divided among the individual members of the company and others interested, in proportion to their ownership acquired in the farm lands, by paying the government price, $1.25 an acre, whenever the land should be placed on the market at the land office.”

By this transaction, including all its “ifs” and “ands,” New England came to Blodgett’s settlement, and here it has remained, giving to present day Beloit more of New England’s characteristics and institutions than present day Beloiters ever think. It was the largest real estate transaction in all Beloit’s 100 years of history, and perhaps one of the most profitable. For when, a few months before, Caleb Blodgett bought, he paid Joseph Thibault $200, or $250, or $500 (versions differ) for an unknown number of acres. But when he sold, it was after this manner:

One-third to the New England Emigrating Company for $2,500.

One-fourth to George Goodhue for $2,000.

One-sixth to Major Charles Johnston (or Jonson) and John Doolittle for $1,500.

And when he pocketed the $6,000 in cash, or notes as good as cash, he still had left for himself one-fourth of all the land that was bounded by Thibault’s “three looks”—good long, far-sighted looks, you may be sure.

That WAS a real estate boom, and by it the white man took root in the pleasant place where the Rock and Turtle meet. It was his home now. The Indian would speak of it often with longing, but never more would dwell by its streams and hunt its woods for bear and venison as his ancestors had done.
The New England Company Comes

- Blodgett and Goodhue toiled at the race flume and their new sawmill that raw and windy March of 1837 while Bicknell, Crane and Dr. White pooled their few dollars to buy a team of horses, a saw, axes, and seed so that wheat and oats and corn and potatoes might be planted to furnish food for others of the Company when they came to their new home. Then Dr. White set out for Colebrook to tell the Company what he had done and to start the colony westward. When the weather was open sufficiently Crane and Bicknell felled trees and split rails for fences, plowed and planted fields.

They lived in the Blodgett “spare” room for a while, but on April 26 they bought the Thibault cabin, tore out the old puncheon floor and laid in it place a floor of boards, “smooth” side up, which they got from the sawmill, which had saved its first boards on April 15 and now was running night and day to provide lumber for homes. Homes were much in demand, for the news had passed up and down the valley that the New England Company had chosen Blodgett’s settlement for colonization. That meant quick growth, a village, increased land values, opportunity.

In the Thibault cabin lived Crane and Bicknell, Major Charles Johnston, Don and Cezar (Caesar) Jones and W. Delamer. The Joneses and Delamer were blacksmiths working on the mill. Berths for four were at one end of the cabin, the fireplace at the other. Supplies at first were 10 pounds of flour, six pounds of salt pork and a bake-kettle which was a gift of Mrs. Blodgett. The larder was replenished occasionally by tea, coffee and sugar, which the men walked to Rockford to buy at Stephen Mack’s trading post, and on May 10 there was a feast for that day they bought a hog’s head of pork at Rockford and hurried home with it. It cost them $31, a magnificent sum.

There was even more rejoicing on June 5 when young Alfred Field, unmarried and in a hurry to get to the west, arrived from Colebrook with a wagon drawn by four oxen and piled high with four barrels of pork, four barrels of flour, seven bushels of oats, a number of farm tools and other equipment. The pork had cost him $20 a barrel and the flour $7.50 a barrel in Cleveland. There was another feast, in which the Blodgetts shared, for the folks at the Turtle were very, very tired of scanty rations and suckers and redhorse from the sawmill flume.

What time they could snatch from plowing and planting, felling trees and building rail fences, the Colebrookers employed in hewing square timbers for the new New England Company boarding house which must be built at all speed to house the colonists when they arrived, for several were already on the way. Dr. White had reached New Hampshire in mid-April and found the Company all “in good spunk” (letter written May 10, 1837). What was equally important, he found them with $1,400 of Company money which they were ready to bring, or send, to the Turtle. He was glad to be back at Colebrook to speed the migration, but final breaking of the old ties was not easy, for he wrote: “I find it hard to resist the various importunities to remain and renew my practice.” Field urged haste. Others of the Company are coming soon, he said, and turned to with a will to prepare for them. Nor were the others far behind. On July 3 came Ira Hersey from Maine and was hired by the Company, though not a member. On July 13 Leonard Hatch, a member, arrived, but became ill and after only two days was forced to return east where he sold his share in the Company on Dec. 27, 1837, to Israel Cheney, who forthwith came to join the colonizers at the Turtle. On the 20th came Dr. George W. Bicknell and his brother, Edwin.

Then Friday, Aug. 4, while R. P. Crane was hard at work on the board “shanty” he was building for his home at what is now the corner of St. Paul avenue and State street, he heard a great halle and much excitement. He dropped his tools and hurried to the creek bank a little way south. There on the opposite bank was a wagon drawn by three horses. In it were his wife and baby son, Ellery; Deacon Horace Hobart; Captain and Mrs. Thomas Crosby and their baby son, George; Captain Crosby’s mother; his brother, James Crosby; and Mrs. James Cass.

What reunion there was at Thibault’s old cabin, for Mrs. Crane was...
sister to the Bicknells, too, and there was much to tell of the folks at Colebrook and of others who were coming west, or planning to come.

Shortly afterwards came Eleazer Crane, father of R. P.; and Asahel Howe on Aug. 22; and by Nov. 10, Dr. Horace White was back at the Turtle, bringing with him two other Company members, Cyrus Eames and Lawrence Beach. By this time only four members of the Company had not come west. Of these, Captain John W. G. Taylor—himself a former member of the Canadian Company—had now come to the Turtle; but they were not the only ones who came in that year of 1837. Other arrivals that year were (from the reminiscences and diaries of R. P. Crane as arranged by his son, Ellery B. Crane, Massachusetts legislator and historian):

Lucius G. Fisher and his father, George W. Fisher; J. Bradford Colley and his sister, Mrs. Atwood; Deacon and Mrs. Henry Mears; Benjamin J. Tenney; Paul (Old Boney) Field, who drove his ox-team from Michigan to work for the New England Company and later gave his name to Boney's Island in Rock river; Tyler H. Moore; Harvey W. Bundy; William Bundy; Chauncey Tuttle; William Grimes; Charles Messer; Ira Hersey; William Jack, farmer; a Mr. Ellis; Royal Wadsworth; John Doolittle; C. F. H. Goodhue, father of George Goodhue and a former member of the Canadian parliament from Sherbrook, Quebec, who first had settled at Watertown, Wis.; Hiram Hill, carpenter; Silas Tasker; John Reed; Captain John P. Houston; James Carter and Horace Clark. Very likely there were more, but their record is not preserved.

With so many here and coming, there was work for all to do; no room for the lazy or laggard. There were shanties to be built of the rough boards from the new mill, whose saw screeched night and day and still could not cut the logs into planks fast enough. There were fields to plow and plant all the busy spring and summer, and to be harvested of their first crops in the autumn. A village was in the making and there were many things to do.

These things were done in common. Nearly all were proprietors of their own interest in the land, though there were a few employees who worked for wages. But mostly the menfolk did their work in common, building each others' houses, plowing and planting each others' fields, splitting the fence rails for each other—every man doing what he best could and all sharing in the benefits of his labor. They shared equally, if truth were known, because one man's meat and meal was as much to him as the other's; they were making a livelihood, building a shelter against the winter, getting three meals a day, and storing up something for the months when the fields are fruitless. In this situation the man with the least interest in ownership had as much as the man with most, for all that any man could have was food, shelter and security from famine in 1837.

Because the virgin prairie was not easy to "break" and because there was so little time to do it and too few plows and oxen, the plow was first put to many acres by roving prairie-breakers who roamed the new country finding work where they could. They were "Hoosiers" from Indiana or "Jobbers" from southern Illinois. They traveled by prairie schooner, driving oxen and hauling the great prairie plows which cut 18 to 22 inch furrows. They charged $3 an acre for breaking the new land to the plow. They were nomads and they moved on when the job was done or the settler had no more money to pay.

There was little enough meat, too, and to supply the deficiency, the pioneers sent Cyrus Eames and Caleb Blodgett down to Quincy, Ill., where there were hogs for sale. These two bought as many as there was money for, slaughtered some of them at Quincy and packed the meat in hogheads which they loaded upon their great wagon. But not all the meat could be transported to the Turtle by wagon and so 30 hogs were herded all the way, through woods and fields and across streams, to Blodgett's settlement. The trip required four weeks time.

Somehow the work got done, and there was zest in it. Here was pioneering, but it was pioneering with a purpose. It was primitive, and much of it was intended to be only temporary. But it was urgent. Board shanties were ready for occupancy in three or four days time and families and friends crowded under their friendly roofs. In the Crane shanty, 16 by 12, with a loft under the roof at one end, lived Mr. and Mrs. Crane and their baby. Dr. White, Cyrus Eames, and George, Otis and Edwin Bicknell. The fireplace at one end kept all warm, or as warm as they expected to be. Cooking was done in an oven built a little distance from the shanty. There was a cupboard in the corner near the fireplace, but the dishes in it were so few all could eat at the same time. The Cranes slept on the bed that floor under the loft; the others climbed to the loft by cleats nailed to the side wall.

When the harvest was made a bridge was built across Turtle creek. It was probably about the place where the present State street bridge is. The builders were Colley, Crane, Otis, Bicknell, Crosby, Cass, Grimes, Parker, Willey and Beach, and it was finished in two weeks and opened for use Nov. 30.

Work was begun, too, on the New England Company's boarding house, the biggest building in the place and one that served for many years as the Beloit House later. Nine shanties were occupied by the New England Company. An ell had been added to Caleb Blodgett's boarding house.

Probably never in Beloit's hundred years has there been so great activity as 99 years ago; nor so much hurry. Neither, perhaps, has there been at any time since so many dreams set well upon the way to realization, so many enterprises planned, so vast an enthusiasm and so much right good will.

It was infectious. Great things were in the air. Nobody yet owned any land; all anybody owned was a share in whatever claim old Joseph Thibault and Caleb Blodgett had by right of first settlement. But that would come out all right; no one doubted. So sure of that were these first Beloiters that they had a surveyor, Kelsou, come out the fall of 1837 to make a survey and plat of that "tract of land one mile square . . . reserved from mining purposes and platted for a village, the same to be owned by each party, company or individual interested in the original claim, and the lots to be divided among the individual members of the company and others interested, in proportion to their ownership acquired in the farm lands by paying the government price, $1.25 an acre, whenever the land
How The Land Was Divided

The original portion of this building was the first house built in Beloit from sawed timber. It was built in 1837 by Caleb Blodgett with boards from the Blodgett-Goodhue sawmill. Later additions were erected and it became the Beloit House, one of the two first hotels. It stood on the site of the present Goodwin Block and in 1853 was moved to the corner of Public and State to make room for erection of the Bushnell House (now the Goodwin Block). It was conducted by John B. Dunbar as a hotel in 1853-54. Later it was used several years as a seminary for young ladies; still later as a factory for the manufacture of paper bags.

The New England Emigrating Company had been organized to colonize a new community in the west. It had done so. A generous portion of Colebrook's population had been moved, bag and baggage, to Blodgett's settlement. The colonizers were housed; they had been fed. Accident and disaster had been avoided. All this by every man bending his back to a joint effort in a community undertaking. But it was not intended this should always be the case. Those pioneers were and since the Company had a one-third effort in a community undertaking.

So each of the members became not only a farm owner, but the owner of many or few village lots when the division was made. The division was made upon this basis:

Cyrus Eames had a credit of $630 with the Company. He received Farm No. 5 (280 acres) and the buildings upon it; two timber lots; a draft on the Widow Lucy Dyer for $165, which, if she did not accept, could be traded for Farm No. 12 and the buildings upon it; 26 lots in the village.

Otis P. Bicknell had invested $373. He received Farm No. 1; a yoke of oxen; an interest in the Company's boarding house; 12 village lots.

J. W. Bicknell, whose interest in the Company was $400, received Farm No. 3; a share in the boarding house; Major Johnston's note for $128; a river lot; a timber tract; a plow; 12 village lots.

Asahel B. Howe invested $326 and got in return Farm No. 8 (280 acres); an interest in the boarding house; two cows; a Johnston-Doolittle note for $49; 12 village lots.

Israel Cheney, who had bought from Leonard Hatch for $500 the interest in the Company for which Hatch had paid $1,070, had for his share of the division 580 acres of land; $100 worth of fencing; a substantial interest in the boarding house; approximately 55 village lots.

David J. Bundy invested $310 and received Farm No. 10; prairie land in Section 4; 80 acres of timber; a wood lot adjoining the village; a share in the boarding house.

General Ira Young, who never came west and subsequently sold his properties, had $285 in the Company and got Farm No. 9; prairie land in Section 4; a timber lot; a town wood lot; a share in the boarding house; 16 village lots.

Lawrence C. Beach's investment in the Company was $358. He received Farm No. 2; a timber tract; a wood lot adjoining the village; John Doolittle's note for $100; 17 village lots.

Samuel G. Colley's share in the Company was $274, for which he got Farm No. 7; a holding in the boarding house; 80 acres of prairie; 18 village lots.

George W. Bicknell invested $124 and received Farm No. 11; five village lots; a substantial interest in the boarding house.

Robert P. Crane invested $158 and received a share in the boarding house; prairie land in Section 4; a wood lot adjoining the village; eight village lots; the Company's mare and double harnesses.

Horace Hobart had a $400 interest in the Company. From it he got a lot on the bluff; a share in the boarding house; one-third of the abandoned Langdon claim; 15 village lots.

Dr. Horace White had a credit with the Company of $933. His share at the division was Farm No. 6; a large interest in the boarding house; three 24-acre lots just north of the village; a wood lot adjoining it; a timber lot in the country and several pasture lots along the river; three yoke of oxen; 58 village lots.

Alfred L. Field had $908 in the Company and in return received a large holding in the boarding house; two-thirds of the Langdon claim; a bluff tract; 23 village lots.

There also was for each member of the company a proportionate share in a considerable quantity of vegetables, grain, corn, and tools and equipment hitherto used jointly.

It does not, however, tell all the truth to say that for $200 or $900 any man of that brave Company received in return a certain number of farm acres and a score of village lots. There was more than money involved in his interest in the Company. The money would not have sufficed if it had not been buttressed by courage and determination and sacrifice; if there had not also been as a vital interest in the Company a fine spirit of cooperation and a brave
Now Beloit Becomes a City

- Until the autumn of 1837 the new town was called Blodgett’s Settlement, the Turtle, or New Albany, and one man’s name for it was as good as another’s, or practically so. But a new town demanded a new name. No one will know for certain who it was that chose for Beloit the name it now bears, for among those at the meeting when a name was chosen there is disagreement and two committeemen later claimed the honor. The Crane manuscript says it was Major Johnston, and that the good Major wanted a name as nearly like Detroit as he could induce his companions to accept.

Lucius G. Fisher says in his memoirs that Major Johnston “undertook to sound a French word for handsomely ground” and that his pronunciation sounded like “Ballotte.” Said Fisher: “And I sounded after him Beloit,’ like Detroit, and pretty and original, I think. All sounded it and liked it and we reported it to the 20 or 30 who sent us out and it was unanimously adopted; and it has ever since been Beloit and not New Albany.” So it has been.

The years 1837-38 brought some new colonists who were not New England born but native Belosters. In June 1837, the first child came to the colony. It was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Royal Wadsworth. The first male child was young Lucien, son of Deacon and Mrs. Henry Mears, born two and a half miles north of the village on March 29, 1838. There was great to-do about young Mr. Mears. The Rev. H. Lyman, writing in 1856, said:

“All the people regarded this birth as an event; the women were proud and jubilant, the fathers of the settlement were tickled; they congratulated the parents, suggested an illumination, talked more at large of giving a building lot to bless the boy and encourage the parents, (the lot was even designated); but the week passed, the excitement subsided, they became first prudent, then obious, and, like many genial promptings, the benevolent thought blasted in blossoming and perished from memories on the spot where it sprang. The rights under it are now barred in the statutes of limitations but the lot remains eth unto this very day; on Broad street it may be seen.”

company, the Blodgets, and the others, managed by struggle to build their new community, money was of least account.”

One of the oldest houses still in its original location is the Dole homestead in Public avenue east of the Methodist church. It was built in 1837 by Holland Moore, and sold by him to the Dole family in 1845. Dole occupied it for many years. It is now the property of Miss Mabel Pratt.

On June 10 arrived young Selvy Blodgett, the first male child born within the limits of the village itself. First native-born among the New England Emigrating group was little Miss Abby Moore (later Mrs. William B. Strong), daughter of the Holland Moores and granddaughter of the Israel Cheneys.

Deacon Hobart and Alfred Field built new houses that summer and George Fisher started work on his home at Pleasant and Public. C. F. H. Goodhue also built a house. There was much talk of a school building and a church. Thomas Mc El Henney, a tailor, came to town and the Cheneys already were here from Vermont, three brawny sons and their father. Everybody was building a house or planting a crop, and many were doing both. Between times, along in the fall, Joseph P. Cheney and Lucius Fisher separately made several trips to Milwaukee to fetch cookstoves for the new houses and business was brisk at $32 per stove.

Before winter set in Deacon Peter Field arrived from Colebrook. Came also Captain John W. Bicknell, Eleazer Crane (father of R. P.), Samuel Beach Cooper, Martin E. Moore, John Burroughs (first schoolmaster), William Young, Samuel G. Colley and Humphrey Clark.

But before the year died there died also Chloe Blodgett, wife of Caleb and the first white woman to make a home for pioneer husband and children at the Turtle. She was 55. In three wildernesses she had been as much a pioneer as her husband. Perhaps more, for the lot of the pioneer’s wife has never been easy. Two years later Caleb Blodgett also died. Neither lived long in the community they established, but their children’s children live here still. So it is with pioneers.

There was a good crop of wheat the fall of 1838 and the stony the gist mill ground much meal. There was building night and day at the sawmill. Mr. Mc El Henney made a sign and hung it in the Blodgett lodging window to advertise his tailoring skill with scissors and needle. It was the first merchandising sign in the town. Good carpenters got $2 a day and “boarded themselves.” Board was $4 a week at the Beloit House. There were 200 people in the village by spring of 1839 and brand-new white-painted board houses were replacing the old shanties. Building lots brought from $20 to $100 each. Selvy Kidder was planning a carding mill in St. Paul avenue and Samuel Cooper bought lumber for a new house. John Hackett had opened a store and Field & Lusk the other. Hiram and Marvin Hill opened a blacksmith shop and John Burr was tinner and cabinetmaker and doing first rate.

Rafts of logs floated down Rock river almost every day to be sawed into planks and beams. There was talk among the more enthusiastic about building a canal between Beloit and Milwaukee. A stage line was established. It didn’t run stages every day, but twice a week was often enough so that Postmaster Hackett didn’t have to send young Edgar Blodgett or himself ride to Belvidere or Rockford to get the mail. David Noggle, who had studied law while plowing fertile Illinois acres came to town and hung out his sign. He was Beloit’s first lawyer. He never learned to spell but he won many a lawsuit. Hazen Cheney was the second lawyer. In 1839 came also Alexander C. Douglas from New York City, John Cooper, Israel Stethbins, Hiram Hersey and Rice Dearborn among others never now to be named because the data is lacking.

In March, 1889, the first government sale of lands upon which the colonists had settled was held in Milwaukee. Lucius G. Fisher, then 31, was proxy for all the claimants. Of the sale Fisher wrote: “I was chosen bidder for all claimants in the south half of the county east of Rock river, the lands on the west side having been brought into the market before at a land sale in Milwaukee. The claimants all secured their lands, they standing by me and permitting no one but me to bid on their lands, and I got all for them at the up to price of $1.25 per acre. Here I met the cousin and agent of General Philip Kearney and arranged with him to buy lands for...
the General and take the agency of the lands purchased. I made entries for him at Milwaukee and afterwards at Dixon land sale and subsequently entered some thousands of acres with Mexican soldiers' land warrants on shares and managed his estate in the west for some years, and in 1856 I bought his remaining lands at $60,000 and closed my account with him. He visited me once in Beloit.

Not until the Milwaukee land sale did a single Beloit resident actually own as much as a spadeful of earth in the new community. They had bought and sold, had built houses and made farms on faith; and their faith was not betrayed. They now had legal possession of the soil but it was not until a famous land suit jeopardized their ownership in 1855 that their rights were established beyond all challenge. In this suit the transfer of a lot in the downtown section on the authority of a claim made prior to the land sale was the issue. By repeated transfers one title to this land came into possession of Governor Paul Dillingham of Vermont; another, was held by Lucius G. Fisher. Dillingham was the father-in-law of lawyer Mathew H. Carpenter (later United States senator) and Carpenter pressed the easterner's pretensions in the famous case of Dillingham vs. Fisher. If Dillingham could establish legal title, then ownership of much of Beloit's downtown property was jeopardized. The community was distraught. Rufus Choate, Edward G. Ryan and Carpenter were counsel for Dillingham. Fisher was represented by James R. Doolittle, Daniel Cady and Abraham Lincoln, who wrote a brief for the defense. The Rock county circuit court and the Wisconsin Supreme Court found for Fisher. Carpenter promptly took an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court, but a decision in a Louisiana case involving the same issue was decided adversely to Carpenter's pleadings in the Beloit case and the matter was dropped. Until this, however, downtown property owners were insecure in their holdings and some even bought new titles from Dillingham; or really from Carpenter, who was blamed for instigating the suit. There was much bitterness.

In 1839 Fisher was appointed sheriff and tax collector of Rock county by Territorial Governor Dodge. In 1840, John Hopkins was employed to make a new plat of the settlement; this is the "original plat" upon which land titles have been conveyed ever since. Arrivals in 1840 included Dr. Jesse Moore and his family, Phillip Burroughs, Joseph Colley, Benjamin Brown, the Rev. Dexter Clary and Joseph La Haie. Soon afterward came Charles Peck, David Merrill, Captain Thomas Power, Edward A. D. Murray, A. P. Willard, Hugh Lee, W. S. Yost, J. G. Winslow, James Wadsworth, Alvin B. Carpenter, George Gilman, Isaac Gilman, Judge John M. Keep and others.

A township government was established in 1842. David J. Bundy was elected first chairman; Joseph Colley and John P. Houston, supervisors; Israel C. Cheney, clerk; Asahel B. Howe, assessor; Edwin Bicknell, treasurer; Henry Mears, collector; S. G. Colley, Charles M. Messer and Alexander Douglas, highway commissioners; Leonard Humphrey, Milo Goodrich and Dr. Jesse Moore, school commissioners; Otis P. Bicknell, constable; Ira Hersey, sealer of measures; Thomas Crosby, John Reed and Richard Cole, fence-viewers.

The community was incorporated as a village on Feb. 24, 1846, and at the first election on April 7 the following were elected: Captain Thomas Power, president; Joseph Colley, Thomas Tuttle, Tyler H. Moore, Asahel B. Moore, trustees; C. M. Messer, William Stevens and Henry Mears, assessors; O. P. Bicknell and Daniel Blodgett, constables; John P. Houston, treasurer; John B. Burroughs, clerk.

The first city government was organized in 1856 and William T. Goodhue was elected Beloit's first mayor. By this time other leading citizens were here, some as early as 1845. Among these were John N. Reynolds, Otis Manchester, John Dates, the Rev. Stephen C. Millett, Hiram Northrop, Dr. Asahel Clark, Clark Nye, Sereno T. Merrill, A. H. Grovesteen, Chester Clark, Dr. E. N. Clark, Alexander Gordon, William Russell, Anson P. Waterman, Elijah Gridley, Samuel Hart, Col. William Rood and Parsons Johnson.
By this time, too, churches and schools had been built, a dam across Rock river erected, factories started, a bridge had taken the place of the river ford, land and village lots had doubled and trebled in price, the rail-road had come, gold had been discovered and many a Beloiter had gone overland to California. There was work for all and opportunity unlimited. In 20 years a wilderness had become a thriving, bustling, busy city. The pioneers had built well. They were now completely transplanted from New England's hills to the prairies bordering the Rock and the Turtle.

No history of Beloit is this; but enough, perhaps to reveal a little of its beginnings, to tell in part how and why there is a Beloit to celebrate its 100th anniversary, and to demonstrate the determination of its founding fathers who faced difficulty and were not defeated by it.

In observing its Centennial Beloit honors the pioneers—pioneer men and pioneer women who made a community in a new place in the west and gave it the character it bears today.

**The Marrying Justice**

- Beloit Journal and Courier, 1860: "The public has no doubt observed that Justice S. S. Havens announces in his business card, that in addition to administering justice with an even hand, he is prepared to tie up the matrimonial knot with special neatness and dispatch." We were not aware how much truth there was in this pretension till we saw him do it. A pair of deluded beings from the State of Illinois presented themselves at his office last Monday evening and requested to be placed under committal bonds; and although we could not help reflecting upon the folly and weakness of this couple, we must confess that Squire Havens slipped the matrimonial yoke upon their necks with a neatness and dispatch that wa interesting to witness. Indeed, so quickly was it done that the twain seemed to be in some doubt as to whether they were securely yoked. But they were as effectually tied as though it had taken an hour and a half to do it. Neither did the Squire neglect to seal the knot by immediately implanting a most energetic kiss upon the blushing cheek of the lovely bride. As for that matter, however, we observed that the groom did not seem to be favorably impressed with that part of the performance. He evidently considered it illegal; but upon a moment's reflection apparently adopted the conclusion that it was a way the Squire has—and it is. Prospective brides will be pleased to make a note of this fact."

**Pioneer Origins**

- The Beloit Journal, 1848: "Our friend, George Stearn, Esq., has, for the curiosity of the thing, busied himself lately in gathering up sundry statistics of our village. Below will be found a summary of his gleanings:

  Number of males: 895
  Number of females: 783
  Total: 1,678

  "This is the number contained in the limits of the village merely. In the entire town there are now some considerable over 2,000. The population of the village at the present time falls only 100 short of the number in the whole town at the time the census was taken last spring.

  "The following relative to the places of birth will show the composition of a Western town: born in New York, 555; Vermont, 111; Massachusetts, 70; Rhode Island, 15; Connecticut, 34; New Hampshire, 91; Maine, 46; Pennsylvania, 71; Ohio, 85; South Carolina, 1; Indiana, 17; Michigan, 13; Kentucky, 10; Maryland, 10; Illinois, 52; New Jersey, 4; Virginia, 8; Missouri, 1; Wisconsin, 214; New Brunswick, 2; Ireland, 17; Wales, 14; England, 67; Germany, 23; Scotland, 22; Norway, 40; Mexico, 2; Canada, 92; Sweden, 1; Florida, 1."

- The beacon light in the tower of the First Congregational church shone over Beloit for the first time on Christmas night in 1923. Money for the beacon was raised by young people of the church.

**Shortage of News**

- Beloit Journal, 1849: "In consequence of the wretched conditions of the roads we have had no mails from the East for some two weeks, nor from Milwaukee but two or three times. The telegraph wires are not in a much better condition. We are, therefore very restricted in the news department this week. We have not even the details of the closing up of Congress, at this late date. What has become of the Territorial bills we know not, but presume they sleep the sleep of death in the Senate. They were however, the cause of spirited debate, as we learn that Senator Foote of Mississippi, shook his fist under the nose of Senator Corwin, who floored the mercurial Mississippian without ceremony. A recontre is also reported to have taken place in the House between Meade of Va. and Giddings of Ohio, and another between Thompson of Miss. and Picklin of Ill., but what results or from what causes we know not. Our Madison letter has also failed to reach us in season for this week."

**Another Bad Winter**

- Beloit Journal, 1863: "Temperature reached 37 below zero the first week in January. A light feathery snow drifted badly and tied up all transportation for five days. It was the most severe winter in the memory of the inhabitants."