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Records, Risibilities, and Ruminations concerning the  
Hamlet of Jericho and the Village of Eagle

by

Alice Baker

Somewhere among the fairy tales is the story of a magic ring. The possessor of this fabulous ring could put it on her table at night and there by be able to go where'er she wished. I am assuming the possession of that ring and testing its powers by asking it to take me, and you also, not only around Jericho and Eagle, but also stipulating the time at which I and you would like to be there.

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early  
the 1800's. Magic Ring, I should like to be in and around Jericho in the 1800's. What would this country be like? Since there is no written record concerning much of this region, Imagination and analogy must be called into use, a most dangerous practice when writing history. But of this resource I am sure that most of you past the 50 year age can supplement with many others the incidents which I have listed.

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This region was a woodsy place, woods more extensive than now and timber much larger than that which now exists. In the 1880's, west of Betts Road there was a stand of timber so thick that the pond which flanked it could scarcely be seen. From what is now HyNN to Hy 20 leading to Troy Center, there was a region of timber broken only by the farm homes of ~~Helson~~ Francis Baker, Jonathan Betts, and John Chapman Sr, grandfather of Harold Chapman and Archie of present day Eagle.

But the drouths of 1886-89 thinned that band of trees and to-day Alvin Nelson cultivates the land flanking "Sherman's Pond" as my generation calls it as do the land owners south to the John Chapman place, now a Girl's Camp.

Another instance of this expanse of wood, now non-existent, was found at the former John Buell place on Hy. 67. Up to 1920 one of the best exhibits of dense primeval woods could be found north of his rambling house. Basswood trees, a yard in diameter, oaks of similar girth, unbranched for 30 to 40 feet towered toward the sky.

In the extension of the Buell forest which Harold Pardee owned from 1930 to 1947, I found the stump of a common chestnut tree. This stump was easily a yard in diameter, hollow and from the outside still live rim shoots ten to 15 ft high were growing. I know of no other evidence of the common chestnut in this region. Do you?

Magic ring, take me to the animal trails which led to the sources of water. These trails which helped the Indian to the same source, and in some instances were the basis of highways for the white man. I should have liked to watch the deer, raccoons, skunks, woodchucks, minks, weasels, martins, bear, wolves, and even a few lynxes as they quenched their thirst at Hinkley's spring, or Wm. Sherman's stream or springs, streams at Eagleville or the pond. There was no lake at Eagleville till Dr. Daniel Bigelow put in the mill dam in Dec. or early Jan. of 1856-7.

It would have been a pleasure to meet the friendly Potta-

wotomies, to see their villages, one of which was large, down near the bridge on Hy. 83. Both Jericho and Eagle figured as their hunting grounds. Proof of this fact is found in the fact that most of you present today have Indian arrowheads picked up on your farm property. In the 1880's, my father whose farm was in section 33 of Eagle found many arrow heads, some large, of heavy flint for deer and bear. Some smaller for birds and other small animals. I suspect the arrow heads you found were the weapons that missed their marks, for the Indian would have saved the ones that brought down the deer or bear. Many of you here today may have collections of these same artifacts.

Vicariously, I should, and no doubt all of you would, have liked prospecting this region. There was a time when trappers were the one type of whites who had knowledge of this region. The many marshes in Eagle and Mukwonago made ideal homes for mink, martin, a few beaver, and many musk-rats, hence a rich region for men who knew how to trap. Many of the first settlers did prospecting. A. R. Hinkley, his brother Henry, <sup>and</sup> Andrew Schofield prospected this region a full month before settling on their properties. T. Wm. West, , Thos Sugden, and Joseph Smart looked around before choosing their claims.

I should like to have been with the Chas, Cox family when they selected a site on the property now owned by Mr. Acker, the north west corner of intersection of Hys E and 99. Cox, his wife, and two adopted children by name of Smith decided that the spot was right. The factors of that decision were:

Water, nearby in the creek; trees in abundance with which to build a cabin; game in the woods; and grass for horse or oxen;

their covered wagon a home till a cabin could be built. Cox and his family had come from Indiana and found the spot in June of 1836. Cox is credited as being the first settler of Mukwonago, a region successively Milwaukee, Genessee, and Mukwonago, but his tenure here was short, since he died in July 1838 and is buried in the little cemetery around the corner at Jericho. Time and weather have obliterated any marking on his tombstone and since there are five such marble slabs, his burial plot is not easy to find.

In early days there was much controversy as to who was the first settler. It would have been interesting to be present that Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1836 when A.R. Hinkley cut his initials on a tree with such celerity that Andrew Schofield is credited with saying

"Thee is quick with thy knife, Ahira".

Why did Hinkley decide with such haste on the acres in sections 11, 12, and 14? Water in a nearby spring. Their trail that morning had led to the big spring still flowing on HyNNN just south of the railroad track. There was timber for a cabin, plenty of it, and clearings south and west provided fields for many crops without labor for clearing the lands.

There is still some controversy as to the first settler of Jericho and Eagle. Mrs Caroline Barber Ford of Lake Geneva, doubts that Hinkley was ahead of her grandfather who took up land managed by John Lueck. To Sherman much credit must be given for he has put into written record a history of his life and his coming to Jericho. His record does not, however have the day of the month when he found Chas. Cox in his covered



wagon. Since he left Ripley, N.Y. in Aug., 1836, crossed the state of Mich. with horse and wagon, skirted the Lake to Chicago and took sail boat to Milwaukee, I think the assumption is clear that Hinkley was first since he <sup>Hinkley with 3 companions</sup> left Milwaukee with three companions on ~~Aug.~~ <sup>Aug.</sup> 14. Suffice it to say, that Sherman could have preceded Hinkley. In that fall season, He, Sherman, felled trees for a 14<sup>2</sup> by 14<sup>3</sup> log house, cut enough hay to feed his horse during the winter, and started ~~back~~ to N.Y. by Nov. first.

There was a friendly rivalry between Hinkley and Sherman and in their later days, Hinkley always wanted to outlive Sherman. Hinkley lived 97 years from 1810 to 1907; Sherman lived 100 years lacking one month from 1809 to 1909.

I suspect that again water played an important part in Sherman's decision to choose sec. #4 or he might have had an eye to beauty, for, even today, there is no more beautiful setting for a home than that John Lueck and his family enjoy ~~today~~.

The Parsons family played an important part in the history of Jericho, Jonathan came with Wm. Sherman in the fall of 1836. In 1837 young Jeremiah came and built the hotel still in good condition on the southwest corner of Jericho. I am sure all of us would have liked to meet a person like young Jerry. Twenty two years of age, impetuous, a person with almost plunger tendencies, he saw ~~on~~ teams plodding along with their heavy loads of lead in their journey from Mineral Point to Milwaukee. In this traffic Jerry saw a <sup>vacation</sup>, a service to these weary drivers. He would build a hotel. Unmarried, who would help him keep hotel? His parents may have been with him some of the time, but

they later went to another farm. He, therefore, had a motley crew of people about him which people always designated as "Jerry and Co". From this circumstance Jericho got its name, a particularly apt name in that day when the Bible was the universal source of culture. The name became more applicable when Jonathan Persons, I, and Alexander Winnie built stone walls around Jeremiah's south side and Wm. Sherman's north boundary. Built in 1850, they stood almost intact for a century.

The year 1843 brought romance to Jerry in the coming of the Matthias Bovee family and especially in the coming of the daughter ~~Elizabeth~~ Emily. Like their romance, their marriage was a short one, Emily dying in July, 1845. She had given birth to one son, Hector, who had died at the age of six months and to a daughter at the time of her death.

Fortune was not kind to this young man, not only had he lost his wife and one child, but his hotel had not paid off as he had thought. Other men had put up taverns taking his trade. Adam E. Ray had put up Ray's Tavern at Ray's Corners (Little Prairie) in 1838; Severance had erected another in the intersection of what is now Hy. N and 67 in 1842 and Howe still another a stone's throw east of Severance. Ray's hotel hadn't cut in so much for it was a day's travel away for a slow ox team with a heavy load; but Severance and Howe took much trade away.

Lead mining at best was a spasmodic occupation. The Cornish miners in south-west Wisconsin had had almost 20 years to develop the mines poorly worked by the Indians and southern whites who had come in from Tenn. and Ky.. Then, too, routes of transportation were easily changed by 1845 and at ~~date~~ <sup>date</sup> were again resuming their old routes down the Miss River. So when the

Gold Rush came on Jerry left Wis. never to return.

Another son of the Parson's family figured in the history of Jericho and Eagle. Samos was the first of the Parsons to come to Wis. and for a short while lived at the corner of what is now Wisconsin Ave. and Third St. in Milwaukee. The tales of Wm. Sherman and Jonathan Parsons soon lured Samos to Jericho. Like many of the early settlers, he became a land speculator. Abstracts of title show his many purchases. His is the first name in the abstract of my home. John Tyler grants to Samos Parsons in the year of 1839. His name also appears in the Frank Briedenbach Title. Samos transfers land to Thos Pittman. He also purchased a one acre plot from the land his brother Jerry had purchased. But Jericho couldn't hold Samos. A fanning mill company (Newell and Clement Dustin was starting up (I think in Whitewater) and Samos became interested in this. A fanning mill was a Big invention in those early days. The actual date of Samos's leaving Jericho, I do not have, but the Crimean war of 1852 gave such an impetus to wheat raising that Wisconsin clearings became as profitable as California gold mines and gave a profit a lot more certain. Hence the mfg of fanning mills & good business.

Jonathan Parsons was another member of the Parsons family whose personality is worth noting. What was he like? In the first place, he was a student. When Wm. Sherman closed in the passage-way between his two log cabins, he used it for the first school room and assigned Jonathan to be the teacher. Again when Sherman gave Jerry Parsons \$75 to build the schoolroom on the second rise west of the creek, Jonathan was the school teacher.

An oil portrait in the Methodist church at <sup>Eagle</sup> pictures Jonathan as a smart , energetic , up-to-date young man, just the gallant swain to catch the fancy of fastidious Jane Cross of South-port (Kenosha). Theirs was The first wedding in the Jericho settlement. Jonathan's scholarly reputation made him candidate for the Territorial Legislature in 1842. In 1859 he built the house now owned by Mr. Donald Pierson , the plan of which featured a good sized library . In later years he gave attention to the Methodist church at Eagle and contributed generously to its organization. Dying in June 1876, he left a feeling of deep regret in the hearts of his many friends and neighbors.

Some seven or eight years ago , the pastor of the Eagle church, Rev. Alvin Briggs, had a very pleasant experience in the visit of a stranger , a relative , however, of Jonathan Parsons who presented him with the oil portrait mentioned previously.

The 1840's saw much activity about Jericho Corners. Always in new countries, speculation is made as to the knot of houses that will become the metropolis. If one examines abstracts of titles , he will see that many people bought home sites in the hamlet.

On the northeast corner of Eand 99 was one such plot. Here an eastern wholesale house had established a general store. Thanks to John Skidmore Jr. we have accurate account of the coming of Isaiah Skidmore, grandfather of John Jr. Isaiah Skidmore was a merchant in Staffordshire , England. He had heard of the Owenites at Spring Lake and had corresponded with them intending to cast his lot with them when he came to Milwaukee in 1844. Journeying from that city, he began inquiring about the success



of their communistic venture. The report was such that Skidmore passed them by. When he learned that the store at Jericho was in default, he made investigation of it, the country around, and the goods left by the absconding Spooner with the result that the eastern wholesale company jumped at the buyer and Skidmore jumped at the bargain. Skidmore kept the store and the postoffice, being the only post-master Jericho ever had. Today, postmarks of that Jericho office would certainly be worth a king's ransom if any could be found.

The 1880 history of Waukesha County states that Jericho had two stores, one kept by Spooner and one kept by Skidmore. I think John Skidmore's account proves that there<sup>e</sup> was only one.

Whether Skidmore had any information about the coming of the railroad ~~to Jericho~~ <sup>to Eagle</sup> or any inkling of its location, in 1848 he purchased the present Henry Oetgen farm and built the house now standing in 1850.

The coming of the railroad to Eagle put an end to any hope for larger towns at Eagleville, Palestine, and Jericho. Palestine had a store, a blacksmith shop, and a tavern. Eagleville had a store and post-office. Andrew Schofield owned the mill at Eagleville, kept the store, and was the postmaster there.

The coming of the railroad to Eagle, however, did not do away immediately with all industry in Jericho. Wm. Wilton, who then was the owner of the north-west corner of Jericho sold Wm. Harris a plot for a blacksmith shop in 1868 and in 1875 a plot north of the Harris smithy to Daniel Griffin for a wagon shop. Wm. Wilton also maintained a cheese factory on the site

of Kenneth Mealy's house. This factory did not close down till the early years of the 1900's ,probably 1914.

As I work on the subject of the History of Eagle, more and more I deplore the lack of records and the diinterestedness of people in the matter of keeping records. When working up the history of Ward school for the centenary in 1949 , the records of the old school school which preceded the 1849 building were no where to be found . Reference to them was made in the direction

"The minutes of the old school should be bound together and laid aside".

Some one had laid them <sup>side</sup> forever, probably in a good cook stove. Even the date of the first meeting, <sup>or school,</sup> could not be ascertained . A few days ago I wished to consult the records of early days of Eagle township. Only tax receipts to be found; minutes of town doings not starting till 1956.

As my closing thought to you ,I wish to urge you to keep records of the important things in your life. Wm. Sherman's record of his life and that part of it in Jericho , John Skidmore's account of his grandfather's coming to Jericho are priceless, and give a picture of that former time that otherwise would have been lost. Except for romance , a good slogan for everybody is PUT IT INK.