



The Story of Emigration to Wisconsin



My father, Nelson Page Hawks, was born in Manlius, Onodaga Co., New York, March 18, 1803. His father was a poor man and father left home at an early age to shift for himself. He was apprenticed to learn the cabinetmakers trade and was a good mechanic. When he grew up he went into general merchandise with Mr. Dunn and aslo ran a line of stages from Penn Yan, New York to Geneva, New York. While in Binghamton, New York he met our Mother, Hannah. They were married on February 22, 1830 and went to Elmira, New York where he kept a hotel and where my sister Permelia was born, 1832. My brother Ammi was born at Binghamton, New York, 1834.

Father was the inventor of the first shingle-making machine in 1836 and I have the old patent deed on parchment signed by Andrew Jackson, President, it also bears the signatures of Benjamin F. Butler, Sec. of State and John Forsythe, Commissioner of Patents. This patent was sold to Mr. Rathbone of Albany, New York for \$4,000.



At this time many families of the New England States, New York and Pennsylvania were emigrating westward to Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. Wisconsin was a territory and very wild and new. A few boats ran on the Great Lakes from Buffalo, New York to Chicago but there were no railroads.

Deciding to "Go West" and dertermining on the "Rock River Country" as his future home, father fitted up for the journey with a splendid span of matched horses and strong wagon and in the early spring of 1837 started from Binghamton, New York. Permelia was 5 years old and Ammi 3. If I am not mistaken, Uncle Barney Chambers and Aunt Martha, mother's sister also accompanied them.

The journey was along the Southern borders of Lakes Erie and Lake Michigan passing through Ohio and Indiana to Chicago and from there through Southern Wisconsin to Jefferson County and ending at Aztalan.

Father had shipped all his good from Buffalo, New York to Chicago, Illinois by boat. He had ordered them sent to Milwaukee but learned that the roads were bad from Milwaukee through "the Rock River woods" or in fact there were no roads: so the goods were landed at Chicago.

An old memorandum says: The emigrants went by wagon to Buffalo, New York and from there by boat to Detroit, Michigan where they again resumed wagon travel, their horses and wagons having been shipped on the same boat.

At Carlisle Hill, Indiana, they stopped three weeks being generously offered the free use of the home of the Carlises (friends of the family) who were obliged to go away. Here father traded his horses for a yoke of oxen and three cows and continued the journey. In Chicago they waited three weeks for their goods to arrive by boat. Then again they journeyed Northward to their new home on the Crawfish River, a tributry of the Rock River in now Jefferson County, Wisconsin.

The Government had offered 160 acres of land to every settler and father had selected this spot which happened to be right where the Winnebago Indians were encamped as the headquarters of the tribe, the "village" containing about 300 Indians at the time. I have heard Mother tell how frightened she was when she saw her new home - no house - had to sleep in the wagon till the log house was built. The Indians were friendly and continued so during the whole two years stay there.

