

HAWKS FAMILY HOMES

In early spring of 1837, Nelson and Hannah Hawks, their daughter 5 year old Permelia, and 3 year old son Ammi began their westward trip to the Wisconsin Territory from Binghamton, New York. Later that year they arrived at Aztalan on the Crawfish River (Jefferson County).

Hannah's reaction to Frontier Wisconsin is recorded in Nelson Crocker Hawks scrapbook: "I have heard Mother tell how frightened she was when she saw her new home - No house, had to sleep in wagon til log house was built. The Indians were friendly and continued so during the whole 2 years stay there".

While nothing remains of the Hawks cabin, if you visit Aztalan today, you can see several small pioneer cabins at the site which will give an idea of what their first Wisconsin home was like. Late in 1839 Hawks sold his 160 acres.

The family moved again, this time to the American House, a Milwaukee Hotel. After a brief stay there they moved to the Fountain House which Hawks purchased and where Nelson Crocker Hawks was born August 21, 1840.

It was probably at the Fountain House that the incident occured recounted by Harry Ellsworth Cole in "Stage Coach and Tavern Tales of the Old Northwest". Hawks never lost an opportunity of telling a joke. Late one afternoon a stranger appeared at his door seeking accomodation for the night. The jolly boniface, assuming a saintly air, told him in whispers, that he had made a mistake, that the house was not an inn but a nunnery. He invited the prospective guest to step to the door of an inner room to see for himself that he was telling the truth. The two walked softly through a passage and sure enoug, there could be seen a group of ladies garbed mostly in black apparently engaged in some useful work. Hawks directed the traveler to the tavern of Samuel Wells which was not far distant. Here the fellow told of his embarrassing mistake insisting there could be no doubt about the place being a religious retreat as he had seen the old monk himself. Wells, roaring with laughter finally convinced the stranger that he had experienced one of old man Hawks' jokes".

When the Hawks relocated in Delafield for the health of baby Nelson Crocker, it was back to log cabin living. The exsisting Pearmain cabin was their home. In a letter to sister Fannie, Nelson Crocker Hawks remembers: "My first memories of the old log house are clear to me. The big stone fireplace, the white washed logs with huge pegs inserted in auger holes, on which were board shelves. The cubby hole under the stairs that led to the big loft above, one large room the size of the house, where were several beds for the men and chance guests".

In his scrapbook, Nelson Crocker Hawks gives a bit more information. "The house was built by Pearmain and was like most every other log house of its size in those days. The main building was about 20x30 with a stone fire place at the south end. The logs were dressed roughly on the inside. I cannot remember the floor, but I think it was of boards, but I can remember the immense fire place with its flat stone hearth. Lime stone was plentiful in that section and large flat stones were easy to get. There was a lean-to kitchen on the west nearly as large as the main house and also built of logs. The entrance to the house was at the center of the east side and the stairs to the loft, up at the left as you enter." A frame two story building was soon added and connected to the north by a little passage way southern style. My sister frances was born in this new building July 5, 1844.

"All early history of Wisconsin will tell you that every house was a hotel, practically to the limits of its capacity for the taking care of travelers, and as emigration from the east set in strongly at that time and our house being now enlarged it became known as Hawks Tavern and much better than others, in fact hundreds had to be turned away for lack of a sleeping room."

Nelson Crocker says little about how this complex of Permain log cabin, lean to log cabin, kitchen and the two story frame addition connected by a Southern style passageway, gave way to the building of the Delafield House which we know as Hawks Inn.

He says "about 1846 father began building the "Delafield House" an immense business was done from the start. Emigration was like a tidal wave and the new hotel could not handle all. Our house was packed always and the overflow had to camp by the roadside. People were glad to sleep on the floor in the halls and the barn".

Nothing is said about where in this bursting at the seams, newly built, overflowing Inn did his father, mother, 14 year old sister Permelia, 12 year old brother Ammi, baby sister Frances only 2 and himself age 6 find room for family life or a bed and board of their own.

For Hannah Crocker Hawks the building of the Inn must have been a welcome relief after 5 years of moving from New York to Aztalan, to Milwaukee, to Delafield, from living out of wagons, log cabins and hotels. After 8 years, she now had a proper grand Greek Revival home abounding with prosperity.

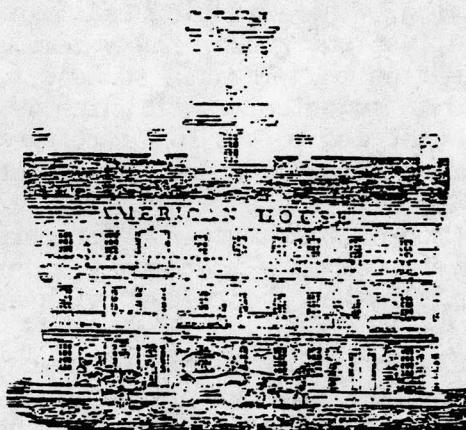
Nelson Crocker writes:

"I can remember those lively days, the jolly teamsters and their songs. Some had been sailors and others boatmen on the Ohio and Mississippi. Lead ore was hauled by wagons across the state from Mineral Point to Milwaukee and our place being a days journey from Milwaukee and noted for good grub and beds. These teamsters wer always with us. I can remember the old hickory whipstocks with braided buck skin lashes."

"Stages came daily, the real articles as you see it in the pictures and the old time stage driver, just as Mark Twain describes him, was a great man, with lots on his mind. I can sometimes fancy I hear the rumble of the heavy wheels, the sound of his horn as he crested the hill near the village, and the crack of his long whip".



1837
Aztalan - Jefferson Cty
Wisconsin Territory



American House
Milwaukee _ 1839



DELAFIELD WISCONSIN
1844