

DANE COUNTY

Mr. Ira Hulbert of Sparta states in a manuscript prepared by him and now in the files of the State Historical Society (Jan. 1910) that he came to Madison on foot in October, 1839 or 1840, from Lake Koshkonong, where he and others had been trapping.

He and his companions came to trade with the Indians about the Four Lakes. They visited a large Indian village where Tenney Park is now located.

There were at that time, he estimated, about 500 or 600 Winnebago Indians encamped here and elsewhere about the lakes. He and his friends remained only three or four days as they could do no trading with them. The Indians wanted tobacco, calico and beads, but they had only brought money, intending to purchase rather than trade for furs. They were offered 30 muskrat skins for 1/2 pound of powder.

The Indians were living in wigwams of various shapes, but most were lodges, the framework of which was made by sticking sticks in the ground and bending them over. These lodges were located in groups of 15 and 20.

They were engaged in hunting and trapping and preparing for winter. The women were engaged in weaving mats of flags and rushes. They appeared to be happy and both young and old were having a good time generally.

"They had a few bungling traps and a few flintlock guns of all kinds but mostly smooth bores and what guns they had were not much to depend upon for it was a matter of speculation whether they went off or not, and their bows never snapped, and when one of their bows let fly an arrow it went about to the spot and went to kill. Their arrows were mostly pointed with flint points ie the ones they hunted with. To be sure the arrows used round camp had a blunt head or a sharp wooden point and they were most all feathered at the end that went next to the string and for a distance of 75 yards they made good shots and from 25 to 40 yards a wild goose or duck was most always their meat for their aim for a short distance was quite accurate and the boys from 8 to 12 years would knock an old-fashioned penny out of a split stick in the ground at a distance of 40 or 50 feet about on an average of every other time, and when an old Indian took his bow and about 20 flint pointed arrows and sailed out of camp about daylight he meant business and when he found a flock of geese or ducks feeding on wild rice near the shore for wild rice grew round the edge of most of the lakes and in the low swampy ground and in such places they could generally get within easy range and not be seen and right then and there he bagged one or two when they got a shot in easy range they generally made it count.

And the lakes had lots of canoes on most every shore and many of them just fine many were made of birch bark and they were just splendid. While others were made of pine logs and the workmanship and style would beat any of our best workman-----"

He tells of their expertness in handling their canoes. He states that they were great gamblers and were willing to stake from one to 20 muskrat skins on a game. They dressed mostly in deerskin but all had a fine point "McAnaw" blanket which they had obtained from the government.