

1
Recollections of the Settlement
of Milwaukee By
James Smith Buck

It has long been my intention
to put upon paper some of the
incidents, connected with the Early
Settlement of Milwaukee and the
part I had in it for the State
Historical Society & it is ~~then~~ to
that Society that these few pages
are Dedicated

I was Born, in the Town
of Lyman. Grafton County State
of New Hampshire on the
9th Day of November 1812. And
my Early years were spent in
that - and the State of Vermont.
But at the age of 23 I went
to Boston and Shipped in the
Ship Prescott - Capt Joseph
Lindsey and went to Calcutta
in the year 1835. He left Boston
(August 20. and Arrived in
Calcutta January 10. 1836.

Left Calcutta, March ¹⁸~~15~~. got
to New York Sept 7. And to Boston
Oct 11. At Boston I met
Mr James H. Wheelock (with whom
I was previously acquainted). Who
was purchasing goods for the
City of Milwaukee (as it was
called) and he wished me to go with
him, and as it made very little
difference with me at that time
where I was, I told him I would
do so - he left Boston in eve-
ning in the Schooner Grecian Capt
Matson for Albany - and
took canal for Buffalo (and
to Detroit in the Old Steamer
Columbus Capt Walker. the
last Boat of the Season.

Here I concluded to remain
until Spring. But Wheelock
went on to Milwaukee (where he had
a Brother) B F Wheelock
(now living at Green Bay

Both of these men were ~~offspring~~
of Col. Johnathan Wheelock. the
Pioneer of Green Bay (and who
died there some 5 years ago)
J. H. Wheelock returned to Detroit

Willing

1836

Stephen
Kopkeus

3

in December. And I concluded
to go to Milwaukee while he
should remain in Detroit, until
Spring

1834

I left Detroit, January
1st on the Back of an Indian
Pony, in company with a Mr
Country of Saginaw Indian
and the day being extremely cold
I froze my feet badly. But
the next day he got a jumper
and came on to South Bend
Ind. where Mr C. left me and
I have never heard from him
since

January 17

from South Bend I came
to Mil. by Stage. Reaching here
and put up at the Bellevue
House. (afterwards called the Alle)
Kept by Mr Hasmer Had for
Dinner Pork & Bread. price 50¢

1843

I then went to Walker's Point
(now called the South Side) where
I found B & Wheelock at the
House of Mr John C. Childs where
I made my home until Spring

4

1843

Mr Childs lived in the House
now owned - By George A Paul of the
Daily News. And it stood at that time
on the lot where John A. Rugee
now lives. Opposite St Johns
Church...

In the month of Feb
I went onto Mr Wheelocks Claim
where G. D. Dawson, now lives
and cut 5 Acres of Timber clear
it off in the Spring split Rails &
fenced it put up a good Block
House for Wheelock, and all I
got for the Whale Job, was my Board
after which, I went into town
and worked for John Childs on
his new house until winter
when I returned to Wheelocks until
Spring. When I went to work for
O. S. Hollister, during term Mr
H. has Building a Warehouse on the
Point. And I graded off the site for
it. This point has an old Burying
Ground. - and great quantities of Relicks
Beads Brass Kettles, Silver Toys &c were
taken from that place by myself
and others

1837

(Indian)

5

The Summer of 38 has been very dry
 And the Lake & River here higher than
 now But while passing up East water
 It is August, the day being very
 Hot & dry. The whole of it from the
 spring up to Huron, so has little
 alive with little roads not bigger
 than a fork Shilling, where there
 come from, and where they went
 so I never knew, there had been no
 rain, neither are there ^{more} plants
 in this than other places. At least
 not that kind of roads

1838.

In the month of April
 I went into town with nothing
 but the clothes on my back
 there was little or no work
 no money in the country, the
 people lived they hardly knew how,
 and work was very scarce, but I
 went to work for Mr Hollister
 as before stated for \$12 p month
 & board had to pay 15 p p parts, worked
 for him until August when I
 went home to it & there I remained
 until spring, when I returned to Mr
 for a permanent home

6

Missaukee Had Settled Rapidly in 1836
 Settlements here begun on Hallers Point
 by Col George H. Haller Brown Kilbuck
own. Had Commenced on The West Side
 and Solomon Janssen, on the East
 Side - Every one was Rich (on Thought
 they were). But the Spring of 37
 Opened their Eyes, - Men that supposed
 themselves worth Half of Millions
 Suddenly Found themselves not worth Half of
Dollar On. At least they could not
 sell out for that, - (and get the
 Money) Many of them left all
 in Disgrace and never returned
 while some who could not get away
 are to Day well off, - A greater Change
 perhaps no Class of Men Ever
 Saw; There has been in Mil
 from 1836 - to 37.

1838

7/3

Mr Hollister Built a
 Warehouse on the Point. Where the
Marine Block, now stands.
 Which has Burned up (I think in 1845)
 Occupied as a very good Store by
J. A. Rathbun - Churchill
 Rep. of Saloon. Where (I think)
 Block now stands

7 And The Old well Stood in the
Middle of what is now Ferry St
Between Ashtells and The
Marine Blocks

There is a good Story, Connected
with this Well. That I will
Tell - in the Spring of 46
Ferry St was graded down, so as
to leave the Old Well about 6 ft deep
(And of course no water in it, but
it was covered with plank

At that time, the Old Putnam
Warehouse stood on the present site
of the Marine Block, (since burned)
And myself, J. Mazone, Old Sam
Dicker, - And others were at work
on the Roof. At that time
there was a float Bridge at
that St. And some Irishmen
from the town of Greenfield, now
coming from Jane's Side, plunk
full of Whisky, and one of them
undertook to run by his knees
on the Bridge, The Result, was
he went into the Cold icy water
(it being in April) But his team got
by, He was fished out. When the

8

went for his Deam. To Stop them
 And the off Cy dropt into the well
 Jim Mazone halloed to him
 That his Cy was gone, for the well
 Was 60 ft Deep. Mr. Irishman
 Took that Cy by the Horns, And
 perhaps he did not lift any, O. no I guess
 not. Calling on all the Scint in
 the Callander, (And some that went
 there). To Help him, (The Cy all the
 time sitting quietly on the Bottom
 of the well) - after Having a good
 Laugh at the poor fellow. He went
 down. And pulled his Cy out. And
 sent him on his way Regreing
 - But his face, was a puzzle to look
 at. When he saw how he had been fooled
 But. To Return

1837

There were living at this time
 on the South Side (barkers Point)
John & Luther Childs. Jerry
Yander, S. M. Dunbar, Luther
Churchill, David Merrill. D.
S. Hollister, Doct Hubbell Loonis
August & Francis Harenmayer
Aley Carter. Capt Josiah Sher-
wood. Capt James Somers
B. F. Wheelock, John &

9 Sylvester Corbin Stoddard &
Martin Phiney Jones, all Heads
of Families, & myself and others
that afternoon married

Chills kept Davem, lander
Kpt Stone, (also the Corbins)
The others were mostly Spec-
ulators,

1857

This 28 Day of May came
the Steamer James Madison
Capt Bristol. The first Boat
from Bellevue. And the Ice
not get out of the Marsh
She brought 800 Passengers &
a very large freight

I should also mention
that William Howard J. C
Smith Mr Kettner, & Doct
Enoch & Horace Chase & Joel
Chilcote lived at the River
ie - near the Mouth of the
River. Also Dr. D. C. White
The Old Point was from
the Prerogative Marine Block S. W.
& Struck the High Bank at the

10

intersection of Reed & Oregon St
 it was about 15 ft High in the
 Middle, and about four Rods
 wide, north & west was the River
 South and East was the Marsh
 and River. There Countless—
Thousands of Ducks, Geese Swam
 and other water fowl. Here cons-
tantly to be seen, in the Summer
 Spring & fall, there now the Whistle
 of the Iron Horse, and the Bury
 of Machinery are constantly heard

1838.

There now at that time some
 5 or 6 Dwellings scattered along
 the Point, Hollister & Bigelow
 kept a warehouse, the Coburns
 kept a Hardware, Stone, and
 Childs a Tavern (as before
 stated). Except the Old Point, all
 was River & Marsh covered
 with water. over which, you could
 sail a Boat any time, there the
 Union Elevator now stands. I have
 been ~~with~~ with a Steward.

1873

and under the side walk in front
 of House Bakery on Lake St is the
 stump of a Willow tree where

11 I used to fasten my Canoe.

(from N Hampshire)

1839

has.

June 6. I Return and a few Days thereafter the Ceremony of Opening the Brexit Mill and Rock River Canal (came off) according to programme. At which I assisted. To the amt. of \$1.50 for a Dinner. The Ceremony of Breaching ground ~~was~~ very imposing and ~~was~~ held just north of the Old Horicon Depot. And Behave me, was very imposing, first Music (one Clarion & one French Horn). Then Speech Then Byron Kilgorn; Commenced to make the Canal (with a Grain Scoop; He put the edge of it in the ground and his foot upon the top, and attempted to force it into the virgin soil, But. Alas He has no money, for that Grain Scoop it went back, on him, for the End of the Blade turned up and looked him in the face - He threw it from him in Disgust, & took a Spade and finally succeeded in depositing a Spade full in the

12

Barrow. Then becoming Exhausted
with the severity of the Labor
He. Surrendered, the Spade To
Felix M^cCauley (An Italian
from Cor R). Who soon filled the
Carriage with Earth, and depositing
it there the. Saw path. Was to be
All Hands then proceeded To the
Old American House. Kept by James
Hark (now living at Beaver Dam)
where he had Dinner, nine
Speeches. and as. great Time
Generally. and thus - has. com-
-menced. and finished the celebra-
-ted R R. Canall. - Settled

1873

1839

This year in July I took
some goods for the mess Cobins
and went to Jefferson, and Paul
A. Stone, is Enoch Darling House
This has the first Store
Ever opened in Jefferson, there
were but no houses in the
place. But quite as. firming Region
in the vicinity. Peter Rogers
and Hon Lucius Barber. lived
there at that time and as. few
Others. (Single men)

13

As Trade was not very brisk, as large portion of the time, was spent in Hunting Bees. - The forest Bees being filled with them. - I helped take up 53 Swarms on the $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. on which the Village has Located, and some of the most Laughable - Scenes Occur at these forays on the Bees that I ever remember to have witnessed.

We had a large gang of Dogs Big & little. That always accompany us (after Coons) for they run here plenty. When a Tree has cut down in hunt them Dogs after Coons But the little Warriors would go for them, and it was very amusing to see the different way them Dogs would act. Some would lay down and roll them off. - Some would run for the River. Some would run in any direction. They happened to be Heckled. When they felt the sting, and as Butt Loving Loving good says. They did nothing, But unequalled irresistible running until they got comfort, which did not always come very quickly.

14

for Sometimes they did not come back
for two days. and one I think must
be running yet. for He never came back
But Those That did, looked like
They Had been through a Smith
Machine. O. But That Was Fun
(for us)

In the fall of 39 the
Corbins failed which broke
up my store. and I returned
to Mil, and on Dec. 5. was married
to Maria Jane Adams, - Boarded
with Childs untill Spring, when
he went to House Keeping

From 39 to 46. Milwaukee
was a poor place, people lived
they hardly knew how, but in 46
things began to improve. and from
that untill the present Mil has
steadily advanced in health and
population and is destined to
become a great City.

ess. I have given some acct
of Waukesha (or the South Side) I
may as well describe the East and

15

West Sides as they appear in
1837.

1836

1873

East Water St has filled in
By Salomon Juneau, To Walker Point
Bridge, Hugh Hodge Had the job
B. & Smith saw living here worked
on it, and I think Hon G. P. DeLafontaine
also one or two small Warehouses here
put up by G. D. Dausseman. one of
which is now standing in the Rear
of J. Dahlmans Store Cor of
E. N. & Detroit Sts, and George
Bouman had a small one story frame
near where Ingham Bros Store now
stands - with these Exceptions. It has
all marsh covered with water and
grown up with Wild Rice. all over
what is now the E. Ward, from the
Mouth of the River, To Huron St

Between Huron & 1st St there
were quite a number of Buildings
of one or two stories each on both
Sides of E. N. St. Juneau lived
on the Corner of Michigan and
E. N. (where Hon Asa Mitchell Bank
now stands, is a two story frame
House standing back some 30 ft from
E. N. St, and had in the front

16

And Two Black Beams Chained To
posts 12 ft High, and it was very
amusing to see them climb those
posts, put their feet all together
on the top, and survey the route
of loafers. and Indians. They were
constantly watching their gambols.

They were finally killed
at a feast given the
Indians; Remnants of the Menominee
and Pottawatimies. They were laying
round loose during the summer
of 1837 & 38.

Where the Kirby House now
stands, there was a high bluff—
as high as the present 2 story windows
of the House. and it extended to the
River, with sloping grassy banks,
to Spring St Bridge (then at Ferry)
at Spring St & Wisconsin St.

The old Steamer Detroit
Capt John Crawford (who is still
living) used to land ~~his boat~~, where
Laddingtons Block now stands,
and myself and others used to
used to sit on the bank, and watch
the boat, while there. and the

1833.

17

Great Martin Van Buren Addressed
the assembled Democracy at the
foot of Wisconsin St. in the
Month of June 1837. or so. I am
not quite sure which

The Well on Market
St. has then a Spring, coming
out of the Bank, and called the Ball
alley Spring, on a lot of a Bowling
alley having been built there in 1837
in the Ravine. Where Stions gun Shop
stands at the present time this Bluff
Extended all along the East Side of Mar-
ket St, and up on Main (now Broad-
way) above Biddle, and East Water
St. has filled, with the Earth taken
from the Risky House, Hill, and
Market Square Hills. So Division
in the Summer of 42 x 42. I am
not certain which,

J. D. Dorseman; lived
where the Custom House now stands
and George Bowman still lives
on the same lot & in the same
House. That he did so years ago - in
Rear of the Custom House

The Old Court House &
Jail now standing until within

18

four years, when the Present
County Elephant, was built, and
 the Old House at ~~East~~ corner of Biddle
 and Jackson Sts (is still standing)
 with these Exceptions - the y^h
 Ward. has all covered with Forest
Trees & Bushes. East of Milwaukee
Sts about North of Wisconsin St.
 And Remond St the most of it, up
 to 1840, Lots were cheap then
 And could any one have foreseen.
 What Milwaukee has to be. They
 could, by securing Lots, then, have
 got greenbacks in abundance
 Some did so - and are now wealthy
 And in the Possession of a
Splendid Home.

On the West Side, or
Kilgourn Town, (as it was then called)
 A Settlement Had Been formed in
 36), And some 20 Buildings Had Been
 Erected that Summer, The Old Repub-
lican House. stood at that time
 near the Old Horicon Depot,
 (Now the Mil & Northem). And there
 were small Buildings scattered along
 3 St from there to Chesnut
 Some Ancient Mounds

19

or Tumli here scattered over the
ground. Between 3rd St & the River
~~from~~ from Chesnut, To
Sherman St

From Chesnut. To Spring
And from the River To 5th St
The ground has all Sweetgum - covered
with Tamarack & Cedar - and
it has here that old st rent tips
the Builder - used to get his sawed
stuff - as he called it (many joists
& Studding)

Spring St has high
ground at or above 5th. And there
the Congregational Church (formerly
Caled. Parsons Love Church). Stands
The ground has a Sink Hole, filled
with green sand, and Tamarack

South of Spring St it has all
water. To 5th. with wild Rice growing
To the Monominee River - and
I have sailed over it in a Boat.

1887

There lived at that time on the
West side Byron Killyorn - Doct.
Proudfits - Caleb Harrison - Ariel
Tamm - Lyman Huskey - J. W.
Lapham - Daniel & Samuel Brown -

20

Garrett Thet - Am. P. Cully - George Knapp - Am. R. Longstreet - Paul Burchett. And Others whose names I have forgotten.

West Water. Third St. has all Marsh from Spring St. to then its intersection with E St. and from there to Chestnut it has all Swamp from Spring to E. forked. Sticks, here driven in the mud. And poles laid in them, on which plank here laid. for a side walk as far as the 2nd hand Board where N. W. intersects Third St. A. Lovable incident occurred on this. Beautiful St. in 1887 which I will relate.

The Boys here having a little celebration, on July 4th at Chestnut St. and some Indians (a large number being in town) were looking on, when some of the Boys fastened a bunch of five crackers, to the dirty Old Blanket, of one of them and set it on fire, Mr. Ingram just give one yell - and started for

the Mous-hunt (or any place
 of safety. That could be found
 (O. But He travelled. Some gave Bet)
 I think He jumped about 20 ft
 Each jump - about jump every second
 increasing his speed, as the square
 of the distance increased and.
 Every time He struck the mud
 A few more Crackers. Exploding
 would suggest to him, to move
 some more, also. I think his
 time has never been beaten
 from Chessnut to Spring its
 except by Goldsmith's maid
 on the Cold Spring Course
 and (that time He did not run)
 you could not get him or any
 other dog, to come within
 gun shot of the Boys for 3.
 weeks. Or to stay on the same
 Quarter Section, if they had any
 fire Crackers, it was to Big
 Medicine - Big Medicine
 But to Return

all the Country on the West
 Side has an unbroken wilderness
 with very few exceptions, where now
 are situated some of the finest

22

Residences in the Country, and
where they must always be, for
nature, & as so ordered it

1837

I sometimes get thinking
of the look that Milwaukee had
in its infancy - and in its wild
state, and in my mind's eye
I see the Indian standing in the
streets to watch the Che-ma-Lum
and think of the beautiful land
he has sold for a song, (and a
poor song at that) - also of the
white men that were here at
that day - they pass in review
before me. I can see their faces,
and almost think I hear their
voices - But alas - most of them
have gone to ^{the} better land - and
soon all of us will follow,
for time is passing our heads,
children & grandchildren
will ~~be with us~~ soon take our places
and we shall go the way of all flesh
God. Help us to be ready - so
that we shall go to an Honorable grave
and our name ^{be} Honored by the Gener-
ations that shall come after

23

us, And when any shall
look upon our Tomb Stones
they can say - That man
has an Honor To his Country
And his Generation

James S. Buck

Now Mr (Paper) if you
think these incidents worthy of a
place in the Historical Society's
publications, I shall be very glad
(of course you must shape
them up a little). neither
do I claim that they add to much
but such as they ~~are~~ ^{are} the Society
is welcome to them. please accept
them, with my best wishes for
the prosperity of our noble State
and may she become the Banner
State of this great Republic
Resps yours

J. S. Buck
Mt Vernon July 4th 1873

Corrections

I should also say that John
Gurlong. L. H. Lane. were here
in 37. Lane on the South
Side & Gurlong. on the West Side.

The first Cargo of Wheat
was shipped. in 42. I think from
the Old Dousemen Ware House at
Foot of E. W. St. in the Schooner
Illinois. Capt Pickering comd -
Myself. L. H. Lane Wm Horwood
& G. G. Dousemen. put it on the
Towel in Bags - the first filled
the Bags at the H. H. Currier then on
the little Steamer. Ran out into the
Bay where the Schooner lay. & put it
in her Hold. So you see I helped
load the first Cargo of Wheat that
ever left Milwaukee.