

PART THREE

EARLY SHULLSBURG

Early Shullsburg

Many interesting histories of Shullsburg have appeared from time to time, but most of these do not go back further than 1832, and scarcely refer at all to that time so full of interest - - the early settlement and period intervening before the Blackhawk War.

Just when the first white man set foot in the vicinity of Shullsburg is not definitely known, or at least we have never seen it so stated. Jesse W. Shull is said to have come in 1818, or 1819 and admitting this to be true there must have been a small settlement here even at that time. As early as 1828, Dublin, as it was then called consisted of about fifteen houses, with many outliving miner's cabins, and many of these had the appearance of having been built several years before while in most instances the earlier mining works had fallen in and were covered with a growth of brush and grass. Taking these facts into consideration, it seems reasonable to assume that there were white people here as early as 1816, and possibly earlier, but apparently none of these became permanent residents.

Among those whose names are mentioned as being here in 1828, are Hugh Ward, Michael Fox, Adam Collins, John Cody, John Demsey, Peter Curren, Patrick Doyle, Dennis O'Neill, John Ryan, Michael Slavin, James McQuade, Nicholas Walsh, John McNulty, and a man named Savage; James Finley and family, John Keenan and family, Louis DeWebbert and family, Patrick Sullivan and family, Michael Ferrel and wife and James Hanlon and wife. These were not all; there are many others but their names have been forgotten.

We have no record of very early marriages - - if there were any - or of births prior to 1829. John Sullivan of whom a sketch is given in the preceding pages was born in January 1829 and this is believed to have been the first birth in the settlement. The first deaths of which we have any record were those of Mrs. Louis DeWebbert and child in 1829, Adam Plank and

John Demsey. Mr. Plank had gone down to the bottoms along the Shullsburg Branch with an ox cart and scythe to cut some grass, and while returning was struck and killed by lightning, somewhere near the site of the old Latey furnace. In the early days it seems that all who died in the settlement were buried along the ridge between the John Troy and Wm. Deppi residences. Some of these graves were marked by means of stones or enclosed by split pickets driven into the ground while other graves from appearance could not be recognized as such. It is related that Peter Curren, while cleaning out what he supposed to be an old mineral hole came upon the remains of a man enclosed in a barrel - - some luckless prospector, who had sought a fortune and instead found death, and was buried this by his companions far from his home and civilization. At least two of these graves, those of Mrs. L. DeWebbert, and child and Adam Plank, are close with the limits of the new Catholic cemetery, but their exact location has long since been lost. Evidence in the shape of old workings show that the mining district around Shullsburg was prospected at a very early date, and in some cases considerable work done. Usually in such places the ruins of one or more cabins could be seen and as early as 1828 nearly all of these were in a tumble down condition and had gone to decay. Who these early miners were or when this work was done we do not know, all histories seem to be more or less uncertain on this point and any thing further that we might and would at best be only guess work. In historical sketches of Wisconsin we find the following: "1719 - - Francis Renault explored the lead mines or regions of the upper Mississippi with two hundred miners. 1786 - Julien Dubuque explored the lead regions of the upper Mississippi."

The causes of the Blackhawk War was the encroaching of the whites upon the rights of the savages. In 1829 the mineral region was purchased from the Indians, but was not surveyed until 1832. In the early part of 1828 - the President appointed

Governor Cass and Col. Pierre Menard to treat with certain tribes for the cession of such to the government, and on the 25th of August a temporary agreement was made by which the whites were allowed to occupy the country where the mines were being worked. This agreement was ratified by the President and Senate of the U.S. on the 7th of January 1829. Removed by the Government to the west side of the Mississippi, the Indians thus far, appear to have been friendly but dissatisfaction soon spread among them. The spring of 1832 Blackhawk and his band determined to recross the river and this led to what is known as the Blackhawk War. At Kellog's Grove, near Galena in the first part of June a party of Indians stole some horses. Capt. Stephenson with 12 men pursued them which resulted in the death of 3 of the troops and 5 or 6 of the Indians. On June 14th, a party of Indians killed 5 white men at Spafford's farm. Gen. Dodge with 29 men over took them and Dodge lost 3 men before they killed all the reds.

The important events of the war are; the defeat and rout of Major Stillman's command at Sycamore Creek, Battle of Pecatonica, Battle of Wisconsin Heights, and the final defeat of the Reds at Bad Axe where they were driven to make a last stand on the river bank with an armed boay and the swift current on one hand and an overwhelming number of troops under Gen. Atkinson and Dodge on the other.

As a means of protection the people then in Shullsburg went to the fort in Galena until Capt. Hamilton in command of a volunteer company built a fort in Shullsburg. They then returned to their work there. It was in the north west part of the town but the exact location of the fort is not known. There were no battle fought in it.

Just when Shullsburg was substituted for Dublin is not known, but it is supposed to be in 1832. An incident with the abandonment of the place at the time of the war should be told: Peter Curren, a miner, stayed behind and gathered

up the tools, buried them for safe keeping, planning to tell where he had hidden them when they returned but he died in Galena and the tools were never found.

Shullsburg in 1828 there were no stores, supplies being hauled from Galena. The houses were made of log. The exact place where Jesse W. Shull's house stood is not known but it was west of the John Troy's residence.

In conclusion we wish to say that if this little work has been found of sufficient interest to insure its preservation, we shall feel amply repaid for our labor, and will now bid the reader adieu.