

**BARABOO AND OTHER
PLACE NAMES IN SAUK
COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

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Baraboo and other place names in Sauk County, Wisconsin by H. E. Cole

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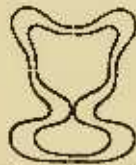
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BARABOO

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In Sauk County, Wisconsin




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By H. E. COLE
Baraboo, Wis.

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INTRODUCTION

 PLACES are named for various reasons. Frequently the name of a person is commemorated, many appellations are of Indian origin, again a name is often applied because of some natural characteristic or object of the locality.

Once Governor Doty of Wisconsin pointed to a river and of an Indian asked its name. The Indian supposed the governor meant the water in the river and not the name of the stream and responded "Nee-nah". The Indian word for water is "nee-nah" and to this day the river is called Neenah.

There was once a Frenchman at Portage by the name of Paquette and when the people of the village now known as Poyette desired the government to establish a postoffice, Uncle Sam asked what the name should be.

PAQUETTE

or

POYETTE

when scrawled with a goose quill pen might easily enough have the "A" look like an "O", the "Q" like a "Y" and

the "U" like an "N". So it was when the would be postmaster sent the name down to Washington. The clerks had never heard the name Paquette and so decided the name was Poynette. When the name of the office came back to the Columbia county hamlet the citizens thought it was a great joke and let the matter rest. The place is called Poynette to this day.

Not only are names sometimes applied in an unusual manner, but place names are often changed for trivial reasons. A study of the origin of the place names in a community is an interesting one. On account of its importance the name Baraboo is here given first place, followed by the other names in the county.

BARABOO

Whence came the word Baraboo? It was first applied to the river, then to the rapids, bluffs and valleys and later to the town and city. There are many conjectures and uncertainties surrounding the appellation and it is very doubtful if the mystery will ever be cleared.

In W. H. Canfield's "Outline Sketches of Sauk County" published in 1873, he says:

"John de la Ronde, a Frenchman who settled at Fort Winnebago, May 5, 1828, and now living with his Winnebago wife upon the banks of the Baraboo river, six miles from Portage, says the river received its name from a Captain Barebeau, who was in Moran's expedition against the Indians, and who wintered at the mouth of the stream.

"On a 'Sixpenny map of the United States' brought from Glasgow, Scotland, by John Dickey, in 1842, a river bearing the name of Belle Chasse occupies a position nearly where the Baraboo river is situated. Mr. Dickey thinks the map was published in 1817. Its English would be 'beautiful chase,'—fine hunting grounds.

"Upon Farnam's map of the Territories of Michigan and Wisconsin, pub-

lished in 1830, it is called Bonibeau's Creek.

"Upon the map of Long's Second Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1823, it is called Mahlenak.

"Morse & Brees' Map of Wisconsin, published in 1844, is the first to call it Baraboo."

The Winnebago Indian name is Ocoochery, signifying "plenty of fish."

The information is sometimes given that there was once a large sand bar in the Wisconsin river at the mouth of the Baraboo river and that at that time the latter stream was known as "Beau" or something of that nature. This word preceded by the word bar makes Barbeau which is easily expressed as Baraboo.

According to an article by William Hill in the "History of Sauk County," published in 1880, Baraboo is derived from a French surname. Aside from the mythical old Frenchman, "Barbeau," to whom legend assigned a shanty at the mouth of the river in days prior to the settlement of the valley, a number of names of real personages give hints of the name Baraboo. The Barbon family was, perhaps, the most celebrated family of printers of France from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

The same author hints at the name being given in honor of Lieutenant General de la Barre, of the eighteenth century and Colonel Isaac Barre, who was a friend of Wolfe and saw him die at Quebec.

At the time the county history was published Professor Henry of the Smithsonian Institution said⁶ that it might have come from French Barbue—catfish—a not uncommon designation of rivers and creeks by the early voyageurs; or from Barbeau—carp or sucker. What is now Putman's creek in Essex county, New York, was Riviere a la Barbue of the French and is so set down on M. de Levy's map of 1748, and in Ponchet's Memoir of the war of 1755-60. Other examples are given and he says that the transition of Barbue to Baraboo is easy.

Mr. Hill found that the term Barbeau was synonymous with Barbel, a large, coarse, fresh-water fish having several barbs of beard-like feelers pendant from the leathery sucker-like mouth, which gave it the name. At that time the Baraboo river was rich in sturgeon and catfish as recorded by Archibald Barker. In the spring of 1841, while running down the Baraboo river, Mr. Barker says:

"In company with Ed. Kingsley, going down the lower Baraboo Rapids each on a crib, I halloosed to him to look

—that somebody seemed to have made a dam of stone across the river. As we approached we saw it was the backs and tails of fishes. We were soon among them and found they were sturgeons. I killed three with a handspike. In jumping into the water to get them I was knocked down by others running against my legs. For a short distance the river seemed to be jammed full of them."

Mr. Hill was of the opinion that "Riviere a la Barbeau" should in the case of Baraboo be interpreted "Sturgeon River." It strengthens this conclusion that the Winnebago name of the river, Ocoochery, signifies "plenty of fish."

Bearing upon this subject Louis Claude wrote March 12, 1872, as follows: "The name 'Baraboo' is now up for final judgment, and although the abundance of 'suckers' both aquatic and terrestrial, which it appears has always distinguished this valley lends so great a weight to the 'Barbeau' theory that I will not 'carp' at it, still I beg to offer the following mite of suggestion—it can hardly be called information—viz; Fifteen years ago, I brought here a map of the date of about 1837, which a small but dishonest boy sold me (emphatically) on the cars for one of 1857. On this map the Baraboo river is marked as