CHAPTER XXI

VILLAGES THAT WENT WRONG

INDUSTRIAL COLLAPSE OF DELTON—MADE WAGONS, STOVES AND FARM IMPLEMENTS—HOP BOOM AND TWO FOUNDRIES COLLAPSE—VICTORIA WISCONSIN PECK HAWLEY (LATELY INTERVIEWED)—OLD NEWPORT (BY MRS. MARY MARKHAM JENKINS)—NEWPORT TRANSFERRED TO KILBOURN—STORY OF NEWPORT (BY W. S. MARSHALL)—THE OLD-TIME LUMBER RAFTS—TRADING POINT AT DELL CREEK—NEWPORT CHRISTENED—WISCONSIN HYDRAULIC COMPANY ENTERS—NEWPORT GIVEN THE "GO BY"—COULD NOT BELIEVE THE TOWN DEAD—LAST FLARE OF THE TORCH—THE DESERTED VILLAGE OF TODAY—FADED IRON INDUSTRIES OF IRONTON.

The Town of Delton, as a subject of history, is chiefly noted for "what might have been" in the way of commerce, manufactures and cities. Newport is only a memory and the Village of Delton is so shrunken from its former dimensions as a manufacturing and business town as to be almost a thing of the past. The rise and fall of Newport has been traced in the railroad chapter, and therefore the writer will not repeat a consecutive story of its hopes and their collapse.

INDUSTRIAL COLLAPSE OF DELTON

The accounts of Delton’s collapse are hardly less sad, as illustrative of the mutability of human plans and institutions, however solidly they seem to be buttressed by their projectors. The record of that village stretches from the building of the first dam and sawmill on Dell Creek by Fox & Topping in 1850 to the going out of the Sarrington and the Timme dams before the flood of June, 1917. Not only were the owners of the flour mills badly crippled by the catastrophe, but numerous hotel keepers and cottage owners suffered; for the beautiful Mirror Lake region had been transformed from the bustling activity of the factory to the strenuous exertions of pleasure seeking and recreation.

MADE WAGONS, STOVES AND FARM IMPLEMENTS

What Delton once was is told by one who once lived in its noise, stress and excitement. The legend runs in this wise, as recorded in the Baraboo Republic in 1913:
'Manufactured in Delton, Wisconsin.' This is a legend which was once almost a household word throughout central Wisconsin. If you should happen to come across it today you would surely wonder what it means. Time was, fifty years or more ago, when it was regarded as a guarantee of quality. It was then to be found inscribed on good farm wagons, two-seated buggies, great two-wheeled ox carts, fanning mills, cast iron plows, elevated-oven cook stoves, cast iron heating stoves, heavy stoves for hop drying, hop presses, hop pole sharpeners, sorghum grinding mills, cauldron kettles, stove hardware, etc.

While rummaging among the stowaways on an old Sauk County farm one day last summer I came across the above phrase spread across the hearth of an old, discarded elevated oven stove and it appealed to me, like a call from the long ago, to record, 'lest we forget,' the fact that our little village here on Dell Creek was not always the sleepy little cross-roads burg which it appears to be today. The desire to tell some of these old-time activities of Delton is my excuse for this letter to the 'Republic.'

Early in the '50s Thompson & Holmes were extensively (for that period) engaged in the manufacture of wagons, buggies and carts in Delton. The product of their factory found a ready sale among the early settlers of Sauk county and of the counties north of Sauk. They manufactured good, honest articles and of a class which seemed to outlast the same kind of goods we get today. But as the country grew older, and the iron horse began to bring this country into closer touch with the outside world, handmade goods had to give way before the inroads of machine made. Holmes moved his portion of the wagon works to Rushford, Minnesota, and there built a larger factory, and after a few years again moved to Winona, Minnesota, where the Rushford Wagon, once the Thompson and Holmes wagon, of Delton, is now manufactured by the Rushford Wagon Works, a corporation of national reputation. Their wagons are on sale from Canada to Texas, all over the south and west. What is left of the old shop is now Delton's one blacksmith shop with one forge, one small wagon repair shop, one bench and one and sometimes two, men as the whole working force.

In the '50s the business of manufacturing grain cleaning machines, or fanning mills, was carried on in Delton. Sidney Ayres invented an improvement in this kind of machinery, making what was called a vibrator machine. As wheat growing was then the main business of all this portion of the state, where farms were opened, the wagons selling the Delton Fanning Mills canvassed the surrounding counties and sales were quite extensive. The writer has in early days driven as far away as Wonewoc, Spring Green, Sauk, and in fact over the country for fifty miles around, selling Delton Fanning Mills. But time went, the cinch bug came, wheat growing became unprofitable, and the fanning mill factory faded away.
"Along the northern border of the village, through the deep evergreen bordered ravine, runs Spring brook. In the middle '50s Clement & Adams built a dam across this brook at a point about midway between where the iron bridge now spans the ravine and where the new fill for the state and county macadam road has been thrown across it. The dam was built of logs and the ravine at the site of the dam was narrow enough for the logs used for the cross-ties to reach clear across from bank to bank. This dam was about twenty-two feet high, making a head of water something like twenty-four feet. Below the dam they installed an old-fashioned wooden water wheel, just such a wheel as you have seen in the engravings of 'The Old Mill.' On the south bank of the ravine they built a machine shop and higher up, on the bank, a foundry. The Delton Foundry & Machine Shop was installed. The writer well remembers the evening when the first heat of melted iron was drawn off the melting furnace, or cupola. It was a red-letter night for Delton. Nearly all the inhabitants were down there to see the beginning of what all thought was to grow into a great industry for the village. Among the products of the new foundry was a cook stove, the first in Sauk county and the first, I think, north of Milwaukee in Wisconsin. From the first the business was a success. Wagon plates, sleigh shoes, heating and cook stoves, sorghum grinding mills, castings for farming mill machinery, foot lathes, iron turning lathes, finally water wheels, and, when the hop boom struck Sauk County, hop stoves, pole sharpeners, prods for setting hop poles, and many other things were manufactured at the Delton Foundry. They even manufactured a six-pounder cannon, mounted it like an army field piece and with it we used to celebrate the victories of the Civil war and awaken the echoes on the morning of the national birthday.

**Hop Boom and Two Foundries Collapse**

"Along in the early '60s another foundry and machine shop was added to the industries of Delton. This was located at the old gristmill. It is now the Sarrington mill. The hop boom ended in 1869. With it died both of the Delton foundry enterprises. The most of the machinery from the first foundry was moved to Rushford, Minnesota. The other foundry continued to be run in a perfunctory manner for a few years but was finally shut down. A few years ago a high water on the Spring brook took out the foundry dam and at this time there is hardly a vestige of the old building left. Time has erased nearly every trace of the second foundry. A few stones of the walls of the moulding room can still be seen, marking the site, and one of the old buildings is used for a store shed at the Sarrington mill.

"Now an old resident has almost to hold up his right hand and take oath to any statement made to a stranger that Delton was ever a manufacturing village and one of considerable note."
In the chapter on Baraboo the participation of Victoria Wisconsin Peck in the founding of the place and the opening of the valley to family settlement is told at some length. The sequel to the narrative is found in the subdued Village of Delton; for there the lady, now venerable and ready to be born into another state, resides, and was visited

Mrs. S. A. Hawley at the Age of Eighty

First white child born in Madison, Wisconsin

by O. D. Brandenburg, editor of the Madison Democrat, in August, 1917. The result of this interview is reproduced:

"The first white child born in Madison now lives in a humble little one-story frame house, like a thin summer cottage, on a sand knoll, some few hundred feet from beautiful Mirror lake, in the village of Delton, a dozen miles north of Baraboo. Justice R. D. Marshall of the supreme court has a mammoth farm a mile or so away. She is Victoria Wisconsin Peck Hawley. Her first husband was Nelson W. Wheeler, a lawyer. She has been married to S. A. Hawley eighteen years."
"Mrs. Hawley was born about 200 feet distant from the East Madison depot of the Milwaukee railway, on September 14, 1837, five months after her parents came, therefore will be eighty years of age next month. She is in good health physically, but it was difficult to get from her, when I saw her last Sunday, a coherent story of any nature. Conducted to the little screened-in front porch by her husband from the one room which the house contains, she hesitated to emerge and actually drew away out of sight, not timidly, but rather defiantly. Her husband finally persuaded her to come out. For perhaps three minutes she sat opposite me talking—by no means intelligently—then rose and abruptly disappeared, her husband coming to take her place; but in a minute more she popped into the doorway again, thumping the floor forcefully with her cane.

"I had asked her something pertaining to her childhood.

"'The records were all in a trunk,' she broke forth. 'When we were galavanting round, Hawley and me, we lost the trunk. I took the key to Ruggles (a Baraboo attorney) and told him to get the trunk, but it had gone to Omaha and so all maw's books and papers were lost,' and she whirled and walked swiftly back from the door.

"'We didn't lose any books,' said Mr. Hawley calmly. 'We have them in the bottom of a trunk in there now,' and he inclined his head toward the room, but he had scarcely finished when his wife again appeared and repeated the same statement; and this she did many times during the hour that I was there.

"I asked her when her mother died.

"'I swan, I forget?' Then she burst out again. 'I shall be glad when it is all over and I am gone too. Maw and I once went down to the Madison state fair and an old Irishwoman came out of a house and said: 'I was the first white child born in Madison,' and maw said 'You were, were you?' ha-ha,' and Mrs. Hawley turned and again disappeared.

"Soon she came to the door. 'Hawley there,' she said 'is a late settler. He don't know anything,' and she vanished, and again reappeared.

'Abe Wood had a daughter Maggie born in Madison and they claimed that she was the first white child born there, but she wasn't. Abe Wood's wife was a squaw, a Winnebago Indian. I was the first white child born there and I wasn't very white either. Abe Wood was an awful fighter but good hearted. He would give away anything he had, but when he got drunk he was awful. My maw was born in Vermont and paw in New York. Everybody comes round here picking up things. Even some schoolgirls were here and they got it that maw was a squaw, but she wasn't. The papers have had a lot of stuff about us, but all the reporters know is what they are told by those who know nothing.' Mrs. Hawley is in error about her father's birthplace. It was at Shoreham, Vermont, the date 1804, but he was taken to New York in childhood.
"Mr. Hawley, who is twenty years younger than his wife, amiably explained that Wood's daughter was named Maggie and that she was born at Squaw Point on the eastern shore of Lake Monona and that she was indeed the daughter of a Winnebago woman. She was married twice, the first time to Charles A. Perry, whom she divorced, and then to a man named Gardner of Nebraska; and there she died a very few years ago.

"Maggie's mother was married twice also, the first time to a Frenchman and they had a daughter Sarah. According to Mr. Hawley, Wood became ashamed of his Indian wife and her daughter Sarah, a French-Indian halfbreed, and took them north to the Indian reservation, however leaving Maggie at Baraboo to be educated like white girls are. He was very sensitive in defending Maggie and in early days at Baraboo had violent quarrels with his neighbors over what he regarded as social slights to his daughter. Wood long years ago fell backward from a wagon and broke his neck.

"The Hawleys visited Maggie some years ago and Maggie later visited them.

"The interview, however, was not without at least one significant feature. Mrs. Roseline Peck, the first white woman in Madison and the mother of Mrs. Hawley, in a paper which she wrote more than fifty years ago, stating that her husband, Eben Peck, deserted her in 1844 and that she never directly heard from him afterward. Mr. Hawley said, however, that many years ago Mr. Peck wrote to his wife from California and wanted to come back, but that she would not have him. He had run away, she said, and left her to bring up the two children and now he could stay away.

"He wrote at least three letters,' added Hawley. 'He was in the honey business in California and wanted to sell honey to his son Victor, who was then running the eating house at the West Madison depot in Madison. The children would not allow him to come back either.'

"This is new information about Eben Peck. It had been reported that he was killed by Indians on the plains, but Mrs. Peck in her reminiscences of 1860 said that 'the last reliable information, but once, that I got from him was by a letter received from him by a citizen of Madison, some six or seven years after he left, stating that he had a wife and five or six children in Texas.'

"The Hawleys resided in Baraboo many years. They have lived at Delton for one year.

"'Are you here permanently?' I asked.

"'No,' said Mr. Hawley, 'we won't remain here this winter,' but he did not appear to know where they would go.

"He is a cement contractor. Mrs. Hawley is a little woman, short of stature, and very slender. 'She has weighed 110 pounds,' said Mr. Hawley, 'but now she weighs only 97.' But she didn't have the appear-
ance of weighing even 90. Her figure is straight and she was gowned in a simple blue wrapper, buttoned from neck to floor behind with a safety pin occasionally where buttons used to be.

"She is quite deaf and very nervous. Her hair is gray and sparse, eyes blue, almost gray.

"'She reads without glasses, and eats well,' said Mr. Hawley, 'more than you or I, and sleeps three-quarters of the time.'

"'Mrs. Hawley broke her ankle some seven years ago. I gave her a diamond ring,' said Mr. Hawley, 'and she had a habit of tying it up in a handkerchief, getting on top of a stepladder and putting it through a trapdoor into the attic. One day while she was doing this the stepladder doubled up and she fell, fracturing her ankle. We never found the diamond. The rats must have carried it off and the handkerchief too.'

"I called at this humble abode hoping to obtain an interview late in life from the first white child born in Madison, but I had come too late!

"Mrs. Roseline Peck, the mother, rode a pony into Madison, from Blue Mounds, arriving April 15, 1837, five months lacking one day before Victoria was born. She was the first white woman here. The family moved to Baraboo in 1840. A son, Victor, was four years old when the Pecks reached Madison. He died here February 29, 1916, and Mrs. Peck at Baraboo October 20, 1899. She was born February 24, 1808, at Middleton, Vermont."

OLD NEWPORT

By Mrs. Mary Markham Jenkins

To one who has never experienced it, the conditions of pioneer life must be as difficult to imagine, as for one who has never known the necessity of saving, to understand what poverty means; and I think in both cases something valuable has been lost out of life for each.

In the early '50s—in 1851—we came to Newport. There was no railroad west of Milwaukee. Coming from Delavan in October, we used our own fine team and thoroughly enjoyed the journey. In the summer previous, father had been taken in—in more senses than one—by a local promoter who had as rose-colored visions of what Newport was to be as any boom town in these days; and he left the lovely Town of Delavan for an imaginary city on the Wisconsin River. Father then rented Doctor Jones' house, now on Broadway, and was to have possession in October. When we arrived Doctor Jones and his wife were calmly eating their supper, with no appearance of ever vacating their house, but they let us into the upright part of it. There was no door for the front doorway, but a blanket did as well for that, as for all the other doorways inside. If portieres had only been thought of then, we would not have minded the blankets so much. However, we soon had an outside door.
Houses were so scarce that every family had to take boarders or let another family live with them. We lived there till our house was built, which is now the one where Henry Van Alstine lives. At first our parlor was upstairs on account of the unfinished state of the lower part, and we had a stove in it, with the pipe out of one of the windows. When the wind would change, my brother would carry the stove across the room and put the pipe out the other window. Don’t think we felt the least unpleasant concern on any such account. Every one lived in some unusual way and “hope sprang eternal” in every breast.

There was not a sidewalk in town, and in the main street the sand was so deep that we always had to empty our shoes when we came home after going down town. There were many young men in Newport, attracted by the promise of a big town—speculators and professional men—bright and promising; and the sand in your shoes was forgotten when you stopped to chat in the street. Everyone was social and cheerful. Parties were generally held in the old hotel now standing. Everyone danced that knew how. There were no class lines; every one that was respectable was welcome. But that does not mean that intelligence was not recognized, and that there was not an inner circle quite as ready for the best things as now. We had a reading club—Van Steenwick, then consul for the Netherlands, a bachelor, whose house was the one Mr. Coon lives in now, was the chairman. We took the best foreign magazines, and the best of our country.

There were no church buildings at first, but services were held in private houses and hotels, and King’s Hall. People used to go to church in those days. The ministers were equal to those of today, and the Presbyterian minister, Mr. Mitchell, quite superior to most. He and his bride began their housekeeping in the barn that Mr. Bennett pulled down not long ago. It stood beyond the brick house that is on the road to Delton. He did not approve of donation parties; so there was never but one for him, when he made it very plain that he was not pleased. He was a very arbitrary man, and as long as he preached here—which was in Kilbourn as well as in Newport—the congregation, according to his command, stood during prayers and sat while they sang. There was a Baptist minister not quite equal to the place he held, and there were always funny things happening. One Methodist minister used to spread a handkerchief on the floor before he kneeled to pray, and as he wore white trousers and the floors were often dirty, he was not to be blamed for it. The choirs sang for all the different denominations, as the different ministers would not fill their special pulpits every Sunday, but had to preach in other places. The music was as good as now. There were many excellent singers there then, and serenades were a pleasant way of showing regard for friends.

At the first bit of sleighing, everything that could be forced into use was made to do service for a sleighing, and I do not remember whether
it was a crockery crate or a dry goods box that I had my first ride in, accompanied by a fine young man of the mercantile persuasion. There used to be general sleighrides, often out to the Halfway house on Webster's Prairie. Then in the summer—picnics to the Dells, and sometimes dancing on the bridge. I remember a large party of young people were asked out in the country to eat honey and hot biscuits; after getting ready to go home the gentlemen were asked to pay for the supper. I will not say where it was, as the descendants still live in this region. There was more real enjoyment socially then than now; because every one was, so to speak, on an equality and no one trying to outdo others in any direction.

Fancy a time when the fashion of your clothes did not cause you any extra thought or trouble! Not that any were indifferent to the way they were made, but provided the material was good and the style becoming, a dress could be worn till it was worn out; in fact, I do not recall any decided article of dress that you could say was fashionable but little fancy silk aprons; and following that, a change in sleeves came about, and from that time on the bondage has grown heavier year by year, until women are now in a slavery that affects soul and body and no emancipator in sight!

One of the early diversions was a celebration when the railroad was finished through Newport Town and a station built on this side of the river near Lynch's. One enthusiastic woman made a cake station in imitation of the one just built and where the celebration was held; but cake and station have long been gone and forgotten.

Pleasant teas, which were suppers, were common, and the good things to eat were as choice as now, but not served in courses. When you sat down to the table you knew what you were to have and so knew what you could safely leave out, if you didn’t like it. The society of fifty years ago was not so different from these days as one might think. The seminary at Newport opened and conducted by a graduate of the Mary Lyon Seminary, and with a corps of most excellent teachers, shows what was thought necessary for the people there. Scholars came from away—among whom was sweet Mary McClay, who was brought and entered there by her aunt, Julia Dent, of the Grant family of Dents.

You may ask what became of that seminary? The principal was Mrs. Cooley, whose husband, the Reverend Cooley, was pastor of the Congregational Church in Newport. The church was not pleased with the Reverend Cooley, and he was notified of the fact. His feelings were so deeply injured that he split up the pulpit so no one else could use it. It was a striking piece of furniture, entirely covered with red plush, and was a dead loss for use, but a good thing to get rid of. As the husband was out of a place, the school had to be closed. The large square building near Kerfoot’s was built for the seminary, but afterwards used for the common school and finally moved away. The Con-
gregational Church uses one of the large upper rooms for church services, and the bell on the building belonged to the church and was bought by private subscription, and it now hangs in the Methodist Church in Kilbourn.

**Newport Transferred to Kilbourn**

The removal of Newport to Kilbourn took almost all of the desirable people, and was so complete that the lives of the two towns cannot be separated. To the circle when moved was added the charming family of Mr. Holly—intelligent, cultivated and social, they were always ready to move in anything desirable, and the picnics they were always stirring up are still a pleasant memory to me, at least. Newport and Kilbourn were surely favored in the quality of most of the early settlers.

The breaking out of the Civil war, and its long continuance, changed the tenor of many lives so that the ordinary things of life took on new shapes, and there was a new atmosphere from that time on. But the streets and houses of Newport are as plain to my inward vision as those of Kilbourn today, and the ghosts of vanished days and people are all about me when I wish to call them forth.

**Story of Newport**

*By W. S. Marshall*

In the latter part of the year 1832, John Metcalf, who in later years owned the upper, or Lyons, sawmill on the Baraboo River, and Daniel Whitney, the first white owner of the site of the present City of Portage, obtained the right to cut lumber and make shingles on the land belonging to the Menominee Indians. These lands were located on both banks of the upper Wisconsin river. Late in the fall of that year they started for the upper river. They took with them a two man power sawmill. It was a whip or pit saw. It was to be operated as follows: A pit some seven feet deep was dug and across this pit the log which was to be cut into boards or planks was laid. One man being stationed in the pit and the other on the log, the saw was drawn alternately up and down and by this means the log was sawed into boards or planks of the thickness desired by the operators.

These men, during the winter of 1832-33 thus manufactured lumber and in the spring of 1833 they built from it the first lumber raft on the upper river. With this raft they made the pioneer run down the river, through the Dells, and to the site of the present City of Portage.

Thus was begun a lumber traffic on the Wisconsin River which in the eighteen or twenty years following grew to a great volume, a traffic which in the years from 1849 to 1856 required the construction of from 2,000 to 3,000 rafts annually and gave employment to 4,000 or 5,000 rivermen during the spring and summer rafting season.
HISTORY OF SAUK COUNTY

It was with a view to securing a portion of the supply trade of this army of river men that a village and a store were established at the point where Dell Creek joins the Wisconsin River, on the northern boundary of Sauk County.

For a distance of eight miles or more above the mouth of Dell Creek the river runs between high rock walls which narrow for a portion of the way to a width of less than seventy-five feet. Through this gorge, when the water was high enough to permit the running of rafts, the river boiled and whirled in a swift, angry current. This gorge forms what is called the Dells of the Wisconsin River and was the most dangerous and difficult stretch of water for the raftsmen to encounter in all the long trip from the mills to the market.

THE OLD-TIME LUMBER RAFTS

The Wisconsin River raft of those days was constructed of two strings, of ten or twelve cribs each, of boards or planks. Each crib was built up of tiers of boards alternately packed at right angles to each other, so that the crib, when complete formed a square packed some eighteen or twenty inches in depth and the dimensions of the square were those of the length of the boards forming the crib. That is, sixteen foot boards formed a crib sixteen feet square, etc. Ten or twelve of these cribs, coupled together tandem, formed a string, and two strings coupled side by side formed a raft. These rafts were fitted with long, broad bladed oars, attached to long timber stems, an oar at each end of each string. A raft crew consisted of from two to four men. Several rafts formed a fleet.

Ordinarily, in good stage of water on the open river, two men were crew enough to handle the raft, but in running through the Dells in high stage of water the rafts were separated into single strings and the oars manned by double crews. Sometimes, in a fair stage of the river, the rafts were not separated into strings, but the crews of two or more rafts were employed to man the oars. So, in passing this stretch of the river, the raft or the string was run to a point below the Dells and then tied up and the men doubled, or walked back to the head, and ran the remaining part through.

Just below the mouth of Dell Creek, the river makes a bend forming a great cove or bay, some hundreds of acres in extent, on the south side of the river, stretching from the creek to Sugar Bowl Rock. This bay was the first available place of any size, below the Dells, where the rafts or half rafts could be tied up to remain while the crews returned to the head of the Dells for the remaining strings, and here was the grand re-assembling point for them after passing the Dells. It was no uncommon thing to see that bay completely covered with tied-up rafts. This favorable location caused the mouth of Dell Creek to become a division,
a re-victualing and resting place for the raftsmen before they started on the long run toward the mouth of the river and the Mississippi. The settlement itself was at first called Dell Creek.

About the year 1841 John Mead, Samuel Bentley and J. B. McNeal located near the mouth of the creek, opening up fields or clearings some three-quarters of a mile south, on the uplands. Two years later a Mr. Jenson took up a claim and cleared and broke up a field one-quarter of a mile south of Mead's field. In 1848 Joseph Sanders settled and began farming one-quarter of a mile west of Mead's. The old Mead, Jenson and Sanders fields are now included in the fields of the farm owned by Judge Marshall.

About this time Frank Darrow established a general store at Dell Creek.

TRADING POINT AT DELL CREEK

The principal outlet which the early settlers had for their surplus produce was the raftsmen's trade at Dell Creek. In the spring and summer they here found a ready market for flour, butter, chickens, eggs and vegetables. In the fall and winter the pinery trade took their spare feed, grain, flour, pork, beef, and the yokes of oxen which some of them fitted up for this trade. Dell Creek was the outfitting point for the upper river lumber camps.

It will be seen, from the above explanation, that the mouth of Dell Creek was, from its location, the logical point for a great trading town to grow up, under the conditions as they existed at this early date.

In the fall of 1849 a flouring mill was completed and put in operation at the point on Dell Creek where Delton is now located, two miles above the mouth of the creek. The settlers began to come and to locate and open up farms in great numbers, for now there was a ready means of preparing their grain for market and the market at Dell Creek was fast growing in importance.

In the spring of 1850 the small settlement at the mouth of the creek was surprised one day by the advent of a small steamboat which came up the river from the Mississippi, laden with goods and to purchase produce from below. Here was a demonstration that the Wisconsin River was a navigable stream and, as the boat could not go through the Dells, Dell Creek was the head of navigation. This meant much at that time. The Government had begun the improvement of the Fox River. A canal was to cut the narrow portage between the Fox and Wisconsin, only eighteen miles below. Then the trade of the great lakes was to come here by water, as well as trade from the Mississippi and the Gulf. Here was the location for a great inland port. It began to attract the attention of capitalists and in 1852 Newport was founded.
The village was laid out and christened Newport by Edward Norris and John Marshall. It included finally all the east side of the creek to the hills and the west side up to a point some 100 yards west of where the Kerfoot house now stands and thence south to where stands the old brick house at the top of the hill, near the Kilbourn and Delton road. Calculations were made for a large city. It was not to remain a village long.

The same year Marshall and Norris built a dam across Dell Creek and erected a sawmill, about forty rods above the mouth of the creek. They began cutting lumber for the settlers and for building up the town.

The writer first saw the place in 1854. At this time it was growing very fast. William Steele had built a hotel on the east side of the creek. It was occupied by Charles Burhans. One Clark was building a much larger hotel on the west side of the flat, near where the Kerfoot house stands, but nearer the river. John Marshall was operating some five or six stores. Doctor Jenkins had moved from Delton to Newport and opened a drug store. There were, of course, several saloons. Hoffman was building what was, in those days, a mammoth brewery, and you may be sure that when the rafting season was on, the place was a lively one, both day and night.

About this time and during the next year it seemed to be fully settled that the new railroad which was being built west from Milwaukee was to cross the river here. There had been three surveys made and those on the inside had reliable information that the one byway of Newport was reported as the best. Everything pointed to its sure location here. The river was to be bridged and the depot built right in the heart of the city. The boom was on in earnest. There was a great rush to get in on the ground floor.

About this time a party of the citizens obtained a charter for a dam to harness the waters of the Wisconsin River and began advertising the superior advantages of the place as a manufacturing point. Capitalists were attracted, some of them coming from Milwaukee to look the situation over. And in their estimation here was indeed the ideal place for the upbuilding of a great city, accessible as it would be by rail to the markets of the east and west, provided by nature with a water route to the south, and, when the Government improvement of the Fox River should be complete, with available water communication with the great lakes. Competition in rates between the water and rail outlets would assure reasonable freight rates for material in and product out. Where could a more enticing prospect be found for a profitable investment of capital?

WISCONSIN HYDRAULIC COMPANY ENTERS

As a result of this investigation, these capitalists made a proposal to the owners of the town site and to the parties holding the charter for
the dam, which was favorably considered. The Milwaukee capitalists, in connection with some eastern people, organized a company, the Wisconsin Hydraulic Company, and a contract was entered into between this company and Edward Norris and John Marshall, whereby the Newport parties agreed to deed to the Hydraulic Company a one-half interest in all unsold lots in the Marshall and Norris plats of the city; for no one demeaned it by calling it a village now. The company of citizens also agreed to turn over to the Hydraulic Company the charter which had been obtained for the damming of the river. Meanwhile an East Newport village had been surveyed on the Columbia County side of the river, and the owner of this village plat also entered into a contract with the Hydraulic Company agreeing to give them one-half of the unsold lots in that village. In consideration of these concessions the company agreed to put in the water power improvements and install the power ready for manufacturing plants.

Now there was considerable property which the company would have to acquire and which, belonging to other parties, was not included in this contract. As this property was vital to their project, the Hydraulic Company would be obliged to purchase it before they could begin the work. The site for the dam selected by them was outside the city plats, just above on the river. The plan was to put the dam across the river at the point selected, then take the water through a canal just above the dam across into Dell Creek pond; then to use the water from a race leading from this pond to down the bank of the river below the mouth of Dell Creek and so discharge it, after passing through the wheels, into the river again.

To carry out this plan the company must acquire the Dell Creek power and flowage rights. They must also acquire the land on both sides of the river where the dam was to abut the banks and also the right of way for the head race, across from the river to the Dell Creek Valley. To prevent parties from putting a prohibitive price on the needed properties it was agreed the deal should remain a secret until such time as the company was ready to begin work and, to insure this, the bond which had been given and the contracts which had been made were not to be put on record for a time, and all parties were to suppress information regarding the trade.

The Dell Creek mill and power had changed hands several times before this for a consideration of $2,000 or less. It was no longer owned by Norris and Marshall. The land where the dam was to abut on either side was not expected to cost more than $10 or $12 an acre, as it was not tillable. The same was true of most of the ground required for the head race and where the lower or discharge race was to go. But notwithstanding the agreement, it was said that the news of the trade became public property almost at once. It was thought that the Columbia County village owners put their contract on record in Portage almost immediately
and visions of great gains haunted the minds of the owners of property which must be acquired by the company.

When the representative of the Hydraulic Company came on to negotiate for the needed property he found that the people with whom he must deal for the same were out for the wealth in sight. A company of twelve of the citizens had, since the news of the projected improvement became public, made up a pool by putting in $175 each and had purchased the Dell Creek power for the sum of $2,000. They now wanted $2,000 or more for each share, or over $24,000 in all. Ten acres of land which included the point on the south side of the river, where the dam was to be located and where the head race was to leave the river, had just been purchased by Ephraim Kingsbury for $10 per acre. He would not sell for less than $1,000 per acre. Lots on the east bank of the creek which were comparatively valueless before, but which were now needed for carrying out the projected plans, were held at $1,000 or more each. The town was on the greatest sort of a boom. People were moving in, investing and building. Local owners were marking up the lots over night and so accumulating easy wealth. The town now had 1,200 to 1,500 residents and prospects of thousands to come. The obstacles proved too much for the Hydraulic Company. Their representative went away without purchasing any property. A change came over the apparent plans of the railway company. It was said that they were encountering like difficulties in obtaining needed property.

**NEWPORT GIVEN THE "GO BY"**

At all events, it soon became noised abroad that a resurvey of the routes had been made and that it had resulted in the recommendation of the route crossing the river where Kilbofn is now located as being the most practical and available. The railroad grade work which, in 1855, had reached the Wisconsin River bank at Lone Rock, just below Newport, was being continued on up the river, indicating that Newport was to be given the "go by."

The above is the version of the Hydraulic Company's change of base, as the writer has it, and but recently, from as near first hands as one could hope to get it after so long a time. My informant is the son of the original Milwaukee promoter of the Hydraulic Company. This son was the representative sent on to acquire the needed properties for the improvement and was the accredited engineer of the Hydraulic Company.

There was another version given in after years by some of the old Newport citizens and it is as follows: "The hopes of the people who had made investments here were blasted by an over abundance of confidence in the integrity of Byron Kilbourn. All were anxiously and confidently awaiting the event of the iron horse, having received the
positive assurance from the railroad manager that the La Crosse & Milwaukee would cross the river at this point. Hotels, stores, schools, churches and dwellings were reared and occupied. Village lots were selling at from two hundred to three hundred dollars each, and everybody was happy. The citizens had got a charter for a dam and were about to harness the old Wisconsin to turbine wheels, but they were induced to make over the charter to the Wisconsin Hydraulic Company, composed chiefly of railroad directors, who immediately obtained an amendment permitting them to remove the site to Kilbourn. This was the beginning of the end. Newport went into a decline from which it never recovered."

This latter version is given in Butterfield's "History of Sauk County," and practically embodies the belief of many of the old inhabitants of the village who were innocent sufferers.

The most of the people living in the country outside the town believed at the time it was the greed of some of the inhabitants of the town, who were there not alone for their health but for "all there was in it," which was the principal cause of the collapse, and the inside history, as it was recently given to the writer, seems to agree perfectly with the circumstances as they appeared to outsiders at the time. His informant stated to him that, with the exception of his (the informant's) father, none of the railroad men were connected with the power scheme, though all were friendly to it. This being the case, it might have had an influence in bringing about a change in the plans. Most people understood that the power location had been abandoned long before it was known that the railroad was going by.

It was a matter which was much discussed in the home of the writer at the time. His father had recently come from an eastern city where he had been engaged in the manufacture of cotton goods. Among other projects, it was proposed to erect a cotton mill in Newport. Hence he was taking an active interest in the matter and had discussed the plans quite freely with the parties who represented the power company. It was his understanding of the matter at the time that, to use his way of expressing it, "some of Newport people had overreached in their greed for gain and had killed the goose which might have laid the golden eggs."

Whatever caused the change of plan, there was no doubt but that Newport had received its death blow. The clank of the hammer, as it fell on the spikes, across the river, where the rails were being laid passing Newport could be plainly heard in the stricken village in the early hours of the morning and, to the ears of those disappointed people, must have been about as cheering as the clods falling on the coffin at a burial. When, in February, 1856, the first house started from Newport, bound for the site of Kilbourn, it was anything but a gala day in the old town. The writer drove two yokes of the many yokes of oxen which assisted in
that exodus. The building moved was the hotel from East Newport. It was the first frame house to mark the new-born City of Kilbourn. It flourished there for many years as the Tanner House and is still standing, merged in the Finch House of today. It has long since lost its identity and lives only in the memory of a few of the old pioneers.

**COULD NOT BELIEVE THE TOWN DEAD**

A few of the other houses and some of the business firms soon followed, but many of the people could not be comforted nor could they believe that Newport was really dead. They were sure it must rise again. From the position where they were inclined to dictate terms the people had now reached a point where they were humble. By December, 1857, they thought that, if the railroad company could be induced to allow a station on the line opposite the town, Newport might still retain her trade and glory. This station would accommodate Baraboo, Delton, Reedsburg and Newport and all the neighboring country between these towns.

A petition to the directors of the railroad company was circulated by the Newport remnant. It was signed by the most prominent business men of the places named. The prayer of the petitioners was that the Town of Newport be allowed to erect a depot on the line of the road where it ran nearest the village, at their expense for the erection and maintenance and that the trains be allowed to make regular stops there for the taking on and letting off of passengers, and for the receiving and delivering of freight. This prayer was granted.

Hope again animated the town and the sound of the hammer and saw was heard again in the almost deserted village. The exodus of buildings and of business firms was stayed for a time. Within the next ten or twelve weeks, one of the handsomest depots on the line was erected by the Newport people and by the last of February, 1858, it was ready for opening. On the 25th day of February, 1858, there was a grand jubilee and festival, to which the residents of all the surrounding country had been invited. It was called, by the hopeful and overjoyed people of the village, “The resurrection of Newport.” There was a procession, a banquet and a great dance. It was certainly a red letter day for the old town and one long to be remembered by the participants. Among the toasts given at the banquet were many which were decided slurs on the railway managers who, in acceding to the petition of the people in regard to the depot matter, should have been regarded as benefactors. Ever after there seemed to be a spirit of antagonism between the powers that controlled the road and the Newport people.

**LAST FLARE TO THE TORCH**

This resurrection was the last flare to the torch. Newport was too far gone and soon was in the pangs of a second death. The people soon
began to leave and the houses to go to Reedsburg, Baraboo, and Kilbourn, or out in the country. For ten years thereafter the place was slowly but surely sliding off the map, and when the postoffice was discontinued, in April, 1868, and the tax collector dropped the Newport lots from the tax rolls and ceased to advertise them for sale for taxes, Newport was indeed dead and became but a memory.

Today but four houses, out of all the hundreds which once made up the village, mark the site. These are the Vanderpool home, once the palatial residence of the town, now the summer home of the Kerfoot family; the brick house on the hill, near the Delton and Kilbourn road, built by the Topping family; the little wooden cottage nearer the road, below the brick house, once the home of the Murrays, and the house now occupied by Mrs. Albert House, near the river road, east of the creek, erected by Mr. Scott. Murray was the master stone mason of the town and he was also a well digger and dug the first well in the village. Mr. Scott was the last of the old inhabitants to leave the dead village. He did not give up hope until the beginning of the present century.

The Deserted Village of Today

The old village streets are all grown up to locust trees and silver poplars, the descendants of the early shade trees. The streets can only be traced by lines of pits which were once cellars under residences and stores. An occasional clump of lilacs remains to mark the site of the home which some hopeful soul was once bent on beautifying with shrubs and flowers. The old gig paths which were worn deep by the feet of the raftsmen as they walked back from the cove below the town to the head of the Dells for the remaining strings of rafts are still plainly to be traced, but these paths are now pointed out to the wondering tourists as old Indian trails. The old brewery vault has been re-christened. It is now the Robbers' Den. Sugar Bowl Rock and Lone Rock retain the names they bore in the olden time.

The other points of prominent rock, nameless in the old time, are now called in the furtherance of tourist interest, Echo Point, Bear's Cave, Observation Point, Chimney Rock, Signal Peak, etc.

If the memory of Newport, so long dead, shall be preserved for the benefit of the curious in the annals of the Historical Society of Sauk County, the writer will feel compensated for the labor of recording it.

The Faded Iron Industries of Ironton

The iron industries which for some twenty years made the Village of Ironton and its neighborhood a very busy and promising section of the county are also past history. The commencement of that local chapter was the arrival of David C. Reed, founder of Reedsburg, to section
10, south of the village to be founded, and the purchase by him from C. C. Washburne of the southwest quarter thereof, on which iron ore was afterward developed. Mr. Reed mortgaged the property to George Tibbitt and in 1855 Jonas Tower came into possession of it. Mr. Tower believed the deposits could be worked to advantage, bought the site of the Village of Ironton, laid out the town on the banks of the Little Baraboo, opened a store, erected buildings for mills and furnaces, and, although he associated others with him in the early period of the iron boom, he eventually shouldered the burden himself, until his death in 1863. The property then passed to John F. Smith and his associates. The mines and the furnaces a mile north, with buildings and apparatus—that is, the entire plants at the ore beds and the manufactory, with large outfit required for transportation, were then valued at over $100,000, which then was a large figure. Under Mr. Smith’s management the Tower estate and mining and manufacturing properties so increased that at his death in 1878 they were probated at $170,000. A large foundry had been established in connection with the furnaces and much of the ore was shipped in the form of metal work for agricultural implements, kettles, wagon tires and various castings. But such enterprises were doomed to collapse when it was evident that Ironton would fail to secure the transportation facilities necessary to move such output to advantageous markets; also, as has been noted elsewhere, when the vast tonnage of the ores of Northern Wisconsin and Michigan came into competition with the comparatively tiny quantities which could be mined from sections 9 and 10, of the Town of Ironton. The decline and almost disappearance of the mines at that locality, and the village founded on them, are virtual repetitions of the story of Newport in the far northeastern corner of the county.

There are now a few houses and a postoffice at Ironton, as well as at Lime Ridge, on the southern border of the town. They are both little rural communities, with few ambitions and rivalries.

Other points of some local significance, most of them former postoffices which have been absorbed by the rural mail routes, are Black Hawk, Troy Township; Loreto, Bear Creek Township; Woodlawn in the Town of Washington; Walton, Woodland Township; Witweir, Troy; Denzer and Leland, Honey Creek; Cassel, Troy.