

Engineer's Error by which Michigan Lost and Wisconsin Gained Part of Iron Range

—BY C. H. KELSEY—
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A silent memorial of Dr. Douglas Houghton, the great geologist who found his winding sheet in the icy water of Lake Superior over two-thirds of a century ago, Oct. 13, 1845, is deposited in the state historical museum at Madison.

It is a section of a Norway pine bearing a shield or "blaze," as known to the surveyor and the lumberman, on which are carved the names of T. J. Cram and D. Houghton and the date, Aug. 11, 1841. The T. J. Cram was Capt. Cram of the United States topographical engineers, who surveyed the boundary between Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan in 1840-1, and the D. Houghton was Dr. Douglas Houghton, first state geologist of Michigan, professor of geology in the University of Michigan, member of the National Institute and the Boston Society of Natural History, honorary member of the Royal Antiquarian society of Copenhagen and member of other scientific organizations.

Few today are aware that Wisconsin probably owes its share of the famous Gogebic iron range to a surveyor's mistake. When Capt. Cram was sent out by the general government to lay out the boundary line between Wisconsin and northern Michigan he was instructed to run the line to connect the head waters of the Montreal and Menominee rivers, forming the natural portions of the boundary under the terms of the act of congress, the Montreal flowing north into Lake Superior and the Menominee south-east into Green Bay.

The captain, in triangulating the country about the head waters of the Montreal, selected as the source of that river the point where a small tributary, now known as the Balsam, enters it from the east. How he happened to select this point is not known, as the main stream rises in a lake, called Twin lake, six miles farther south, and, as the lake is two miles long, it follows, if this contention be correct, that the northern terminus of the surveyed boundary line between Wisconsin and Northern Michigan should have been at the head of this lake, eight miles south of the point where it was located by Cram.

GAVE WISCONSIN IRON MINES.

The error gave Wisconsin, then a territory, a triangular piece of land eight miles wide on the west side and running to a point at Lake Desert, fifty miles east. This triangular includes the city of Hurley, county seat of Iron county, and practically every iron mine on the Gogebic range within what has been taken for upwards of three-quarters of

a century as the Wisconsin boundary line, a district which has yielded millions in mineral value.

The history of the unique memorial in the state museum is interesting. The blaze was first noted in July, 1884, by M. W. Lloyd, a landlooker for the Land, Log & Lumber company of Milwaukee. About seven years later Lloyd called the attention of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Mann of the Manitowish resort on Trout lake, Vilas county, to the blaze. The tree was still standing close to the shore of Trout lake in Town 41 N., Range 7E., in Lot 3 of Section 5, about twelve and a half miles from the state line.

Two or three years after Lloyd told the Manns about the tree, one of their guides, Charles Carigan, cut the tree down, sawed out the blaze and hewed the section into the tablet form in which it now appears at Madison. This was kept at the Mann resort for several years, an object of never-failing interest to guests, until it came to the attention of Dean Birge of the University of Wisconsin and through his efforts found its present place in the great museum.

Carved in an upper corner of the blaze are the Roman numerals XIX, the private mark of Carigan, while on the right hand side is the name "A. Nolan," carved while the tree was still standing by A. Nolan of Minocqua. The whole blaze is in a wonderful state of preservation after having withstood the elements of more than the three score and ten years allotted to man.

HOW ERROR WAS MADE.

The error which cost Michigan 600 square miles of territory was made by Capt. Cram in selecting the wrong terminus for the northern end of the surveyed boundary line. Under his instructions from Col. J. J. Albert, chief of engineers, Capt. Cram started from Green Bay and ascended the Menominee in canoes, the party determining the main channel as it went as the river was to form a natural part of the line. After two weeks the party reached Lake Brule and from there struck across to Lake Vieux Desert, named in the act of congress as the starting point of the line to be surveyed.

Considerable trouble was found in locating Lake Vieux Desert among the myriad of lakes which fill that border country, but after running out the Indian trails and tracing the water courses a lake answering the description was discovered and an expedition was sent out over land to locate the head waters of the

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