

Wisconsin State Historical Markers

Fort Winnebago

Wayside on State Highway 33 0.5 miles east of Portage
Portage, Wisconsin

In the autumn of 1825, a permanent fort was built on this site by the First Regiment of the United States Infantry under the command of Major David E. Twiggs, later a general in the Confederate Army. The fort was constructed primarily to control the important Fox-Wisconsin portage and to protect American traders from interference by the Winnebago Indians. Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, later president of the Confederacy, served here after graduating from West Point. The fort was garrisoned until 1845 and was destroyed by fire in 1858. The only remaining portion is the restored Surgeons Quarters on the hill across the highway. Not far from here (entrance road a half mile west on this highway) is the fully-restored Indian Agency House built in 1832 by the government for Indian agent John Kinzie and his bride, Juliette. Mrs. Kinzie's book "Wau-Bun" contains many interesting episodes of life at Fort Winnebago and in the surrounding community.

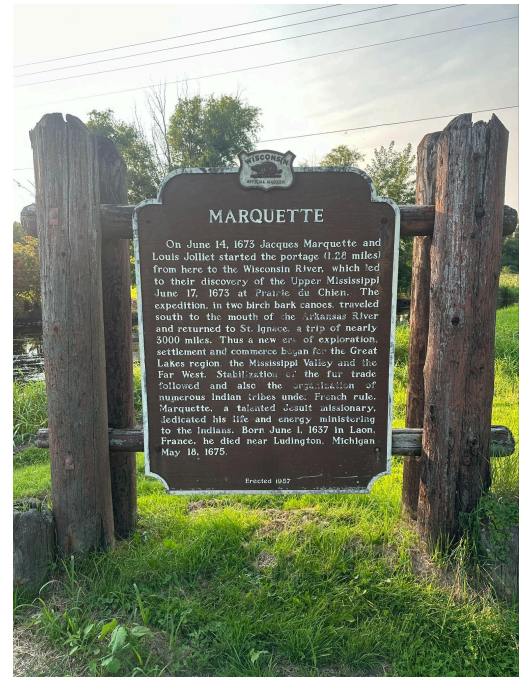


Erected 1957

Jacques Marquette

Wayside on State Highway 33 0.5 miles east of Portage
Portage, Wisconsin

On June 14, 1673, Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet started the portage (1.28 miles) from here to the Wisconsin River, which led to their discovery of the Upper Mississippi on June 17, 1673, at Prairie du Chien. The expedition, in two birch bark canoes, traveled south to the mouth of the Arkansas River and returned to St. Ignace, a trip of nearly 3,000 miles. Thus a new era of exploration, settlement and commerce began for the Great Lakes region, the Mississippi Valley, and the Far West. Stabilization of the fur trade followed and also the organization of numerous Indian tribes under French rule. Marquette, a talented Jesuit missionary, dedicated his life and energy ministering to the Indians. Born June 1, 1637, in Laon, France, he died near Ludington, Michigan on May 18, 1675.



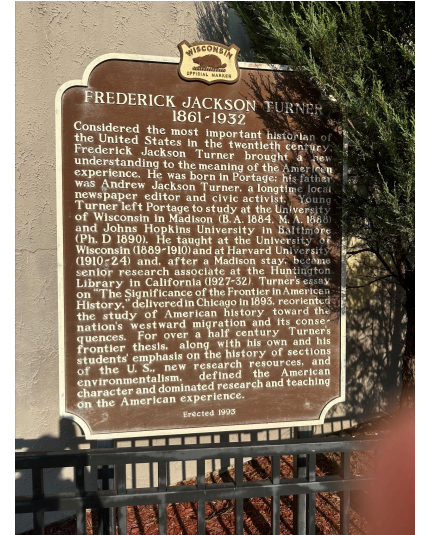
Erected 1957

Frederick Jackson Turner

Commerce Plaza at the corner of W. Wisconsin & Cook Streets
Portage, Wisconsin

Considered the most important historian of the United States in the 20th century. Frederick Jackson Turner brought a new understanding to the meaning of the American experience. He was born in Portage; his father was Andrew Jackson Turner, a longtime local newspaper editor and civic activist. Younger Turner left Portage to study at the University of Wisconsin in Madison (B.A. 1884, M.A. 1888) and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (Ph.D. 1890). He taught at the University of Wisconsin (1889-1910) and at Harvard University (1910-1924) and, after a Madison stay, became senior research associate at the Huntington Library in California (1927-1932). Turner's essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," delivered in Chicago in 1893, reoriented the study of American history toward the nation's westward migration and its consequences. For over a half century, Turner's frontier thesis, along with his own and his students' emphasis on the history of sections of the U.S., new research resources, and environmentalism, defined the American character and dominated research and teaching on the American experience.

Erected 1993

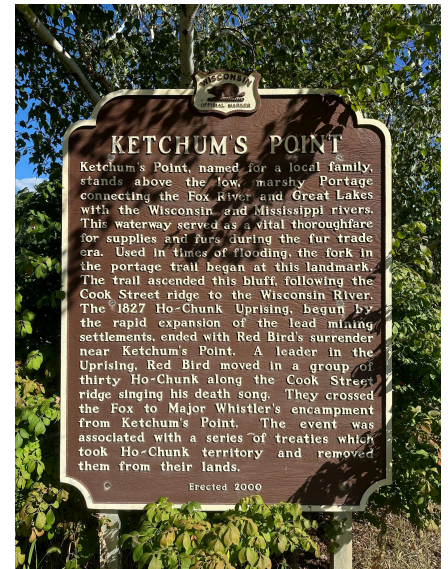


Ketchum's Point

Junction of State Highway 33 and East Cook Street, 0.7 east of State
Highway 16
Portage, Wisconsin

Ketchum's Point, named for a local family, stands above the low, marshy Portage connecting the Fox River and Great Lakes with the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. This waterway served as a vital thoroughfare for supplies and furs during the fur trade era. Used in times of flooding, the fork in the portage trail began at this landmark. The trail ascended this bluff, following the Cook Street ridge to the Wisconsin. The 1827 Ho-Chunk Uprising, begun by the rapid expansion of the lead mining settlements, ended with Red Bird's surrender near Ketchum's Point. The leader in the Uprising, Red Bird moved in a group of thirty Ho-Chunk along the Cook Street ridge singing his death song. They crossed the fox to Major Whistler's encampment from Ketchum's Point. The event was associated with a series of treaties which took Ho-Chunk territory and removed them from their lands.

Erected 2000



Society Hill Historic District

804 MacFarlane Road
Portage, Wisconsin

This 137 building district is bounded, in part, by Emmett, Cass, Wisconsin and MacFarlane streets. Most of the houses were constructed between 1870 and 1910, and are in the Italianate and Queen Anne architectural styles.

Society Hill reflects the wealth and prestige of Portage's early prominent families who lived here because of its convenience to the downtown and the railroad. Located just south of the large Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad complex, the district housed many skilled railroad workers. The district contains the homes of two Pulitzer Prize winners - Zona Gale and Frederick Jackson Turner.

Erected 2002



Zona Gale

Commerce Plaza at the corner of W. Wisconsin & Cook Streets
Portage, Wisconsin

Zona Gale was born August 26, 1874, in Portage. She graduated in 1899 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Masters in Literature. Gale then spent six years as a journalist in Milwaukee and New York.

Her visits to Portage proved a turning point when Gale discovered that the people of her hometown were a source of literary material. She traveled frequently, returning to Portage and living with her parents in a home at 506 W. Edgewater Street that included a study of her own facing the Wisconsin River.

Gale won fame for her "Friendship Village" stories (1908-1919). The popular series described American small town life when subtly portraying Portage people and places. The success of the series established Gale as a popular fiction writer. Along with Sinclair Lewis, she wrote contemporary stories that celebrated local color, customs, and ordinary people.

Gale is perhaps best known for her novel "Miss Lulu Bett" (1920). Her stage adaptation of the novel the following year was equally successful and Gale became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama. In 1928, Gale married local industrialist William Llewelyn Breese. The couple raised a young child, Leslyn, whom Gale had assumed custody for before the marriage, a rare act for a single woman at that time.

Later in her life, Gale spent less time writing and devoted herself to Progressive causes. As an active member of the Women's Suffrage party and Women's Peace Party, she lobbied extensively for the 1921 Wisconsin Equal Rights Law and supported Bob & Belle LaFollette's work. Gale's political activism was her attempt to solve a problem she returned to repeatedly in her novels; women's frustration at their lack of opportunities, a topic she shared with friends Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gale continued writing and publishing until her death in December 1938. Her gravestone at Silver Lake Cemetery in Portage reads, "Life is something more than that we believe it to be."

Erected 2007

