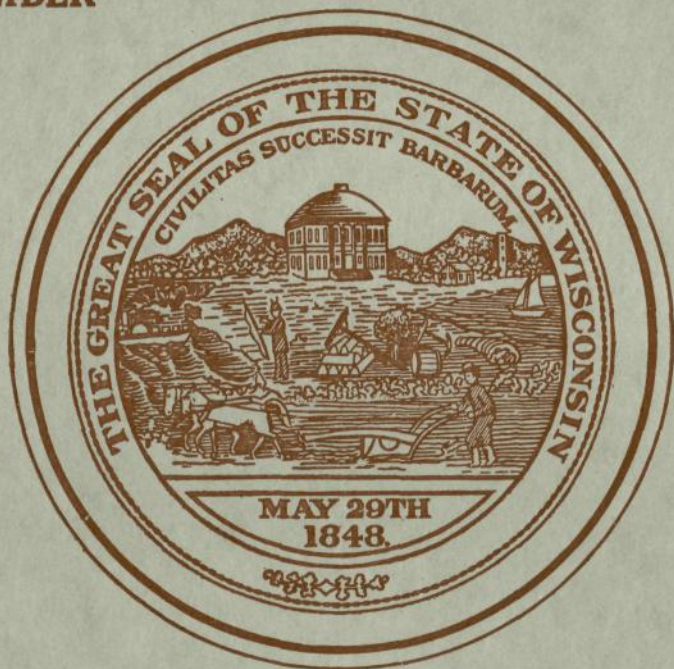


# THE WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

SEPTEMBER

1933



VOLUME XVII

NUMBER 1

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY  
BY THE STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

VOL. XVII, No. 1

September, 1933

# THE WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY



PUBLICATIONS OF THE  
STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF WISCON-  
SIN. JOSEPH SCHAFER,  
Superintendent and Editor

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Paid for out of the Maria L. and Simeon Mills Editorial Fund Income

Previous numbers of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* are indexed in the *International Index to Periodical Literature* to be found in many public libraries.

## DOCUMENTS

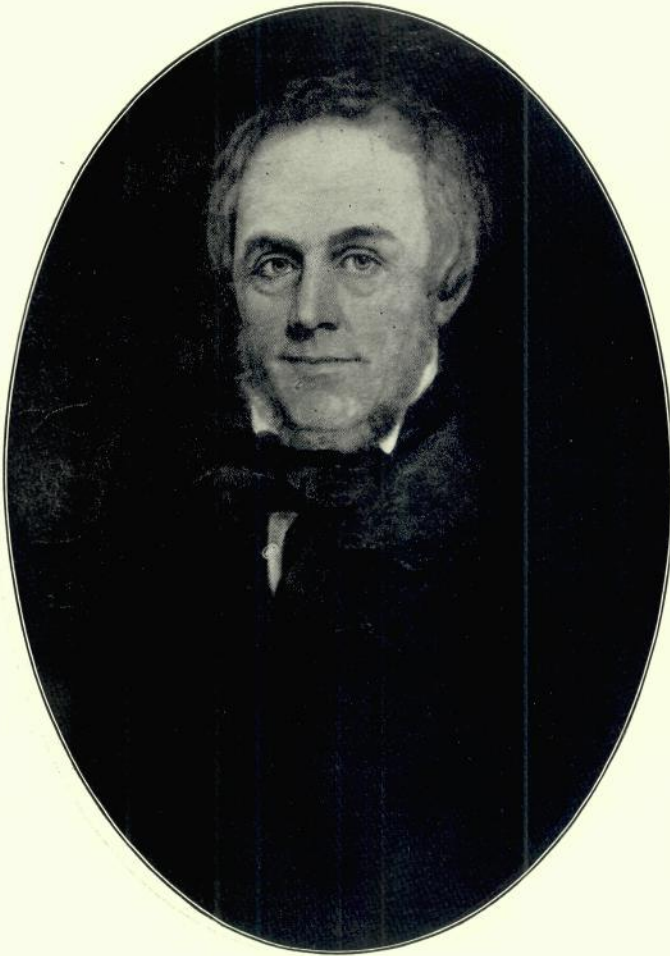
### THE JOURNAL OF MRS. PETER MARTINEAU

BILL HOOKER

**I**NTENSIVE effort, covering a period of five years to develop facts relating to men and women who came to Milwaukee when Wisconsin was largely a wilderness, has resulted in the discovery that many of those who have left distinct and creditable marks on the pages of our history have had less attention than they deserved. It has been so in the case of Peter Martineau, surveyor, merchant, and owner of wild land that became what now is one of the best known parts of Milwaukee and suburban towns, the so-called "Lake Park," "Shorewood," and "Whitefish Bay" districts. He was a distinguished citizen, yet, apparently, a very modest one, who without a doubt had a clear vision of what the then small town of Milwaukee was to become—a great metropolis of the United States.

One of the very interesting developments of this systematic research is the discovery of a valuable diary, kept by Mrs. Peter Martineau. Mrs. Martineau's journal, however, contains none of Mr. Martineau's professional activities, which included the creation of Martineau's addition to the First Ward, surveyed by him. However, this journal records the movements of the Martineaus from the time of their marriage in 1834 up to the Civil War.

In 1852 the Martineaus lived at the corner of Jefferson and Martin streets, next the old Seventh Ward school and also at one time owned a fine home on Prospect Avenue. Mr. Martineau became well-to-do in the fifties, but there is no



PETER MARTINEAU

1802-1874



MARY ANN MEARS MARTINEAU

1812-1882

doubt that the depression of 1857 affected his finances adversely.

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During the construction of the Erie Canal, two young civil engineers employed on that work had their headquarters at Amsterdam, Montgomery County, New York. Their names were John and Peter Martineau, brothers, both born in New York state, but hailing from Montgomery, Alabama, which townsite had been surveyed in 1817. John Martineau was born March 22, 1793, and Peter, September 5, 1802. While working on the Erie Canal, the Martineau brothers boarded with the James Mears family at Amsterdam, and so became acquainted with and married two of the Mears girls. John Martineau married Eliza Mears at Amsterdam, in 1824, and Peter married Mary Ann Mears at Elbridge, New York, July 31, 1834.<sup>1</sup>

#### JOURNAL SUMMARY

Peter Martineau's first employment after his marriage was on a survey of the Croton River as a source of water supply for the City of New York. In 1836 he had work at Norwich, Connecticut. New Years Day, 1837, found the young couple traveling by stage between Philadelphia and Baltimore. From Baltimore to Washington the trip was made in railroad cars, their first experience with that mode of travel.

Quoting from the journal: "Found them very pleasant, the ladies sitting around the stove, gentlemen reading, etc."

At Washington they found Congress in session, and Senator James Buchanan of Pennsylvania was speaking, and they entered the Senate chamber. Continuing: "Was not favorably impressed by his speech. Calhoun, Benton (of Missouri) and Morris (of Ohio) made a few remarks. In the House of Representatives was confusion. Members were

<sup>1</sup>The above biographical account of the Martineaus, as well as the journal summary, was prepared by Charles Mears Kurtz, of Piedmont, California, who is the husband of Mrs. Martineau's niece.

standing about, some with hats on, laughing and talking so loud that the speechmaker was obliged to raise his voice to highest pitch; at least did Pickens of South Carolina, who was roaring like a lion, walking from one end of his desk to the other, and lashing himself to a fury."

On January 10, 1837, Mr. and Mrs. Martineau established themselves in a boarding house at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mrs. Martineau wrote: "It does not suit my taste, but it is the only one where Martineau could get room for an engineer's office, as he is in charge of the 'Slack Water Navigation of the Rappahannock.'"

Slavery impressed her as follows: "What I see of slavery here does not strike me unfavorably, as they (the negroes), seem as comfortable as their nature would allow them to be anywhere. They seem to like their homes and masters and family as well as children love their parents and homes."

On October 14, 1837, Mr. and Mrs. Martineau left Fredericksburg in a stagecoach for a new home in the Southwest. The route was via Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh; thence down the Ohio River on the steamer *Sandusky* to New Albany, Indiana. Here they stayed until July, 1841, while Mr. Martineau was employed on public works construction in the vicinity. Then they moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where Mr. Martineau entered the mercantile business. In April, 1844, they left Bloomington, traveling in a light covered wagon in which were their three trunks. The Indiana roads were wretched at that time. At one stream crossing Mr. Martineau had to construct a rude bridge. Unharnessing the horses, he led one, and his wife led the other over it; then fastening a rope to the wagon, the team pulled it through the dangerous little stream.

Indianapolis was reached April 14, 1844. On the following Sunday morning Mrs. Martineau attended the First Presbyterian Church for worship, she having joined the Presbyterian Church at Bloomington, April 3, 1842. Here she heard a noted Presbyterian divine of that time, Rev. Phineas Gurley. In the evening she attended the Second Presbyterian Church where she heard Rev. Henry Ward Beecher,



then pastor there. She was impressed as follows: "Strange enough, I did not like him (Beecher). His words seemed irreverent. One remark I shall never forget was 'God would snap his fingers at him,' and actually suited the actions to his words. In contrasting the two preachers, one seemed like the thunder clap that is soon forgotten, the other like the 'still small voice' that went to my heart. I wish there were more Gurleys."

Logansport was reached on the eighteenth of April. From this new town to Toledo the journey was made on a Wabash and Erie Canal boat; Toledo to Buffalo by Lake Erie steamer, Buffalo to Jordan, New York, by Erie Canal boat. During 1845 Mr. Martineau was engaged in mercantile business, first at Syracuse and later at Sennet, New York. Late in the fall of 1845 they decided to go West and dispose of the goods Mr. Martineau had on his hands. Accordingly they embarked on a canal boat at Weedsport, New York, and at Buffalo took a steamer for Chicago. On the way they stopped at Milwaukee to dine, but were not favorably impressed. Neither did they like the appearance of Chicago, so on November 6, they went to Racine, making the journey in a barouche, as they "were sick enough of the water."

After a month's waiting the consignment of goods arrived at Racine, and Mr. Martineau opened up his store. However, he soon made an exchange for a large tract of land "near Milwaukee." On January 2, 1846, they left Racine and traveled to Milwaukee in a covered wagon. Here they settled down to spend the rest of their lives. At first they boarded with private families, but in 1852 moved into a fine house on the northwest corner of Martin and Jefferson streets. Here they stayed for ten years, moving in 1862 to the residence at 91 Prospect Avenue, which Mr. Martineau bought at that time.

Mrs. Martineau devoted much of her time to work for and in a new Presbyterian Church started by Rev. Mr. Buchanan. In 1855 the church built a new edifice at the corner of Milwaukee and Martin streets. This was the old North Presbyterian Church which in 1871 merged with the

First Presbyterian Church and formed the Immanuel Presbyterian Church which built the handsome structure on As-tor Street near Division (Juneau Avenue). Referring to the North Presbyterian Church, Mrs. Martineau writes: "I never shall take the interest in it that I did for the little church for which I went into houses and offices soliciting subscriptions."

Mr. and Mrs. Martineau continued to reside at Milwaukee up to the times of their deaths. Mr. Martineau died September 15, 1874, and Mrs. Martineau passed peacefully away April 29, 1882, at the home of her niece (adopted daughter) Alice Louise Kurtz (Mrs. Edward Kurtz), 91 Prospect Avenue.