

T H E F I G H T I N G F I N C H E S

Tales of Freebooters
of the Pioneer Countryside
in Rock and Jefferson Counties

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THE FIGHTING FINCHES

TALES OF EARLY PIONEER FREEBOOTERS IN
ROCK AND JEFFERSON COUNTIES

HORSE STEALING, TRADING, HIDE-OUTS,
BURIED TREASURE,
FINCHES' FORD, BURYING GROUND,
INDIAN FIGHTERS,
BLACK HAWK AND CIVIL WAR
INCIDENTS

THEIR WOMEN, HORSEMANSHIP, THE CAMP MEETING,
CHARIVARI, GOLD-RUSH DAYS

DEDICATION

This little book is compiled with appreciation for the assistance given by residents of Jefferson and Rock Counties and especially for the work of V. S. Taylor, himself a resident of Lake Mills and a former officer of the Federal Writers' Project.

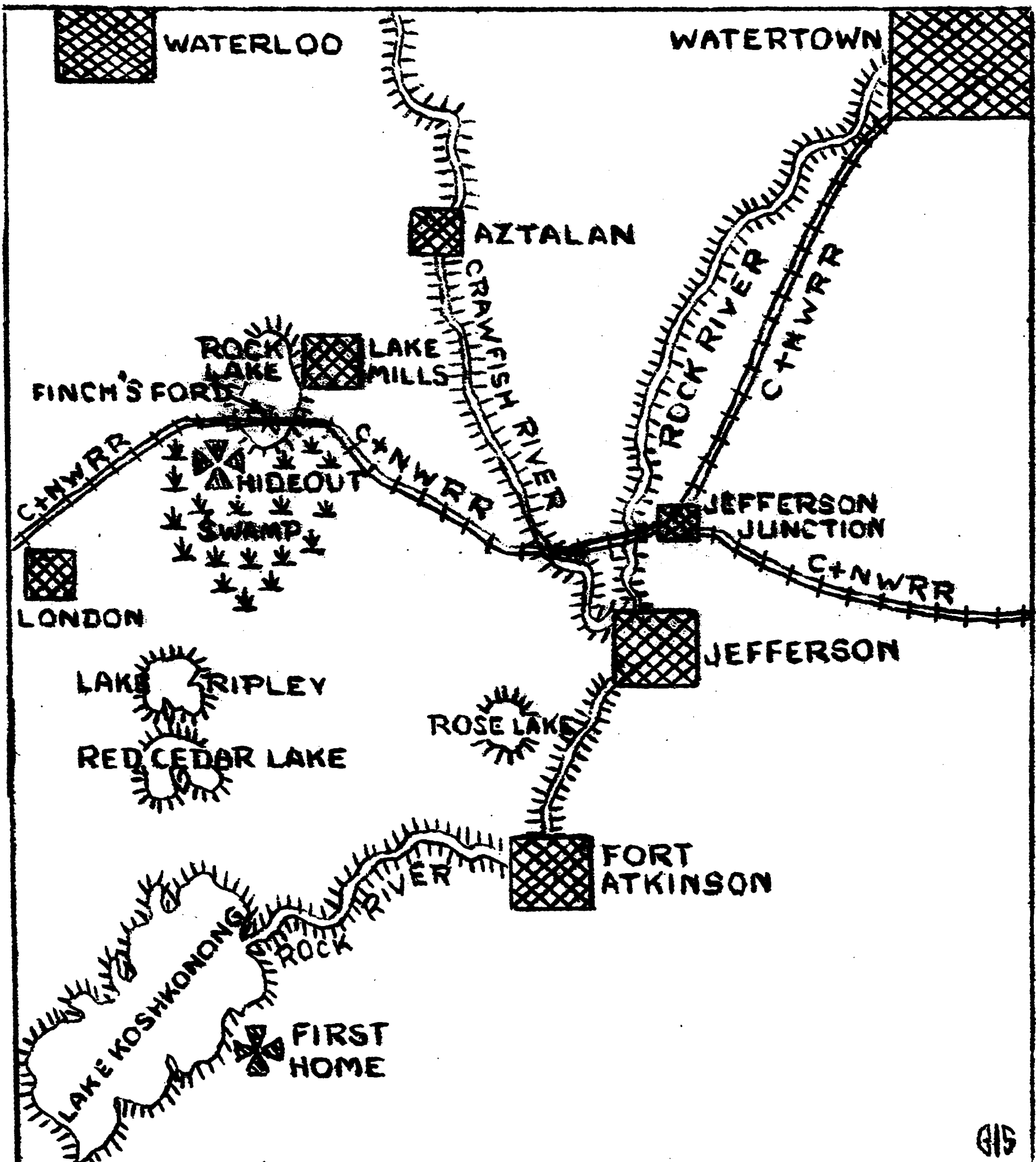
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"FINCHLAND"



This region was a natural setting for the Finches---an untamed wilderness for rough and lawless men. Lack of law and organization, as well as the lay of the land, very naturally furnished opportunities for them to carry on their horse and cattle thievery.

THE FIGHTING FINCHES

FREEBOOTERS OF PIONEER DAYS

In the years before the Civil War the Finches, a lawless tribe of pioneer border bandits, more or less terrorized Jefferson and Rock Counties, from Lake Koshkonong northward to beyond Waterloo and from eastern Dane County to beyond the banks of the Rock River. In this region, some two thousand square miles in extent, were Rock, Koshkonong, Ripley, Red Cedar, and Rose Lakes and large swamp areas, the latter furnishing a safe retreat, or hide-out, for the stalwart Finches and their followers.

The Black Hawk War was the cause of the Finch family's coming to Wisconsin. The father was rejected by the military authorities, but all the sons were accepted. They served throughout the war, some of them with merited distinction as Indian fighters.

A considerable part of Jefferson and Rock Counties was settled by Yankee pioneers, themselves brave and resourceful. But neither they nor the few officials of the law could successfully cope with the Finch brothers.

They settled early in the vicinity of Lake Mills, where they were known as the "Fighting Finches," their own appellation. In all forms of warfare---fistic or gun---they did their best to live up to the name. Cousins by the name of "Lynch," residents in this region, were involved with them in raids and horse stealing.

They were a hard-drinking, hard-fisted, and hard-riding crew. Mounted on fast horses they descended on the prairie and woodland farms, driving before them the farmers' horses and cattle. They were expert shots with pistol and rifle, but so far as it is known they never

committed a murder. One of their hide-outs is said to have been in the big Rock Lake, or London swamp. There on an island, a high spot in the swampy fastness, they were secure after a raid or when too hard-hunted. There were other similar hide-outs in the county for themselves and their stolen horses.

They came from St. Joseph, Michigan, and it was said that their native town breathed with relief when father and sons left to go to the wars, 'for a Finch 'war dance' with the aid of strong liquor could supply as much terror to the timid soul as could an Indian out-break."

As always happens, many acts of pioneer-day lawlessness were blamed on the Finch boys ---acts in which they undoubtedly had had no hand. Some stories are told about them that are mere myths or otherwise unreliable.

When the more lawless members of the Finch clan left Wisconsin they were refugees, driven out by the authorities. The younger element headed for California. A Finch was lynched by the Vigilantes during the hectic San Francisco gold-rush days. He was the first of twelve victims of the Vigilantes' clean-up of the Barbary Coast. This Finch was said to have run a gambling hell on the water front. Some of the Finches returned to their original home in St. Joseph, Michigan; others left for Missouri. The group that returned to St. Joseph was of the better element and attained respectability. Several Finches of contemporary generations have held public office there. In 1933 or 1934 a Miss Finch was elected Queen of a Civic Fruit and Blossom festival at St. Joseph.

The first lieutenant governor of Colorado was said to have been a Finch, an immigrant from Wisconsin. Other particulars concerning this family of romantic border bandits are given in the stories which follow.

FINCHES AT LAKE KOSHKONONG

The Finches settled at Lake Koshkonong and immediately went on record as asserting that the township held room for no one but a Finch. The Finches originally dressed and acted as Indians, and until their reputation became too well known to permit such disguise being used to advantage, the Finches staged frequent "Indian" raids. At this time there were Winnebago Indian camps all along the Rock River, from Lake Koshkonong to beyond Watertown. The Jefferson County map of 1862 (A. Menges & Co., Madison) shows but one Finch farm, a tract of eight acres owned by M. Finch, located about two and one half miles southwest of Fort Atkinson and three fourths miles southeast of the Rock River in Koshkonong Township. It is possible he may have descended from this lawbreaking family.

A poor Norwegian, an early settler of the region, was badly beaten and summarily ordered out of that part of the country. Father Finch and his dozen sons promptly took over the Norwegian's homestead.

When Sheriff Bird, representing the strong arm of the law, came down from Madison, he quickly sized up the situation and hastened back to consult with Governor Dodge, who exploded with the emphatic assertion, "Exhaust the power of the county, sir, and if that don't do, I'll call out the militia, by God, sir. If that Finch tribe is going to run this Wisconsin Territory, I'll mighty soon find it out, sir."

Sheriff Bird wasted no time. Summoning the aid of Luther A. Cole of Watertown, deputy sheriff of Milwaukee County in which Jefferson County was then located, and the aid of an unnamed Madison constable, Bird then headed into "Finchland," grimly determined to do his duty

or go down fighting. Raiding the home of a man named Stevens, who was connected in some way with the Finch menage, they found him feigning illness. They sent him to Madison in custody of the constable.

They then set out to capture a Finch. He was seized after considerable strategy. Posing as lost travelers, the two officers asked the way of Finch. He was cutting wood, and when he laid aside his axe to talk the two men seized him. Sheriff Bird read the order for his arrest, and he was quickly rushed off to Fort Atkinson.

In the meantime Mrs. Stevens had not been idle. Despite biting cold weather she had walked from one Finch cottage to another, spreading the startling news that her husband and one of the Finch brothers were in the hands of the law. Such an insult to their position could not be tolerated, and Ben and Nat Finch were soon on their way in pursuit of the officers and their brother. The officers were eating their noonday meal at Fort Atkinson when the would-be rescuers arrived. Their noisy approach warned the officers, and the Finch duo was greeted with drawn pistols. Obviously stalling for time, Bird asked the two Finches to eat with them. The Finches agreed but asked the sheriff if he actually thought he was going to take their brother to Madison. When Bird tersely told them he had no doubt on that score, the Finches abruptly left with the taunt, "We'll see about that."

Bird and Cole took the hint at once and speedily set forth with their prisoner. The road to Lake Mills was almost impassable, and both men and horses were exhausted when they reached the Lake Mills tavern. An unnamed German operated the tavern, but the role he played in the cause of justice was of such importance that his name deserves to be known. Hastily acquiring fresh horses, Bird, Cole, and the Finch prisoner headed for Madison. A new road had been opened and the tavern keeper urged the officers to take that road.

Scarcely, it seemed, had the officers started for Madison via the new road, when the Finch brigade, armed to the teeth, thundered in from the south. Without great ado they filed into the tap room, ordered "the best in the house," and then asked the somewhat awe-stricken tavern keeper if he had seen three men go through "as if the devil himself was a-chasin' them." The honest German appeared to think for a moment and then said that the men for whom they were looking must have been the three that had just taken the old road to Madison. Nodding wisely to each other, the Finch militia had another drink all around and tore off toward Madison, leaving the honest tavern keeper to worry---not a little---about the consequences he would suffer when his deceit would be discovered.

Governor Dodge congratulated Bird and Cole warmly when they reached Madison with their prisoner. Finch was sentenced to eight months in jail and his eighty acres of land were seized.

Ben Finch, the would-be rescuer, proved to be the one wanted for the assault on the Norwegian, but he fled to Michigan and was never apprehended. The Finch colony, thereafter, maintained an elaborate horse stealing ring and general thievery project centered in Lake Mills. Anti-horse thief societies finally sounded the knell of the Finch heyday.

ROCK LAKE HANG-OUT

The Finch tribe moved to the Lake Mills territory shortly after the law had bested them at Fort Atkinson, and they apparently infested the countryside with a scourge of thievery and downright rascality. Their homestead site was on the former Emil Bretzman farm about four miles west of Lake Mills. Early lore of Lake Mills and the country west of Rock Lake tells how "honest folks would shiver and honest folks' dogs would howl" when the Finch brigade went through the village at night like a whirlwind.

It was claimed that there had been stage-coach robberies, but no written record was ever found to prove this. It was believed that they preyed on those travelers using the Watertown plank road.

As did many pioneer outlaw groups, the Finches maintained cordial, if not intimate, relations with the various Indians in Jefferson County. A Guy Finch is supposed to have married an Indian woman. Some of these Indians also gave shelter to members of the clan when they were being hard-hunted by settlers.

The Finch family had an elaborate hang-out in what is now known as the London marsh, south of the C. & N. W. tracks between Lake Mills and London. Years after the gang had dispersed, skeletons of horses, believed to have been stolen and to have died of starvation, were found in a nearly impregnable spot in the very extensive marsh. Leading through this marsh at that time were paths which only these pioneer freebooters and their adherents knew. No sheriff's posse dared to follow them to this stronghold. To reach this spot from the east (Lake Mills) side of the lake they sometimes forded it on horseback at the point where the

C. & N. W. tracks now cross Rock Lake, but they also invaded the swamp from other directions. This was once called the "Finch Ford." On entering the swamp at night, members of the gang used torches or lanterns. Settlers could see the moving lights through the trees. Out of this swamp hang-out the daring bandits were never routed. When the railroad survey was made in 1880, prior to the opening of the C. & N. W. line from Milwaukee to Madison, the surveyors noted the grade left by the Finches.

BURIED TREASURE

Innumerable wild-eyed tales of buried treasure are linked with the Finches and are more than likely all false. The Finches were never known to have much money at hand, and they were probably too ignorant to appreciate the value of other likely prizes. They were horse thieves and highwaymen, but it is not likely that any of their victims contributed enough to warrant burying the loot.

Finch caches of hidden treasure were supposed to exist near Lake Mills, Fort Atkinson, and on the northwest shore of Lake Koshkonong. Its value was questionable because there was not much money nor many articles of worth at that time. In 1882, however, a farmer near Lake Mills discovered a jar containing money. The date on the coin coincided with the date during which time the Finches had been at their height of power and so the money was believed to have come from a Finch cache.



FINCH HORSES

No one will ever know just how many horses the Finches and their henchmen stole during the years of their raidings, but the number must have been considerable. No doubt they were blamed for many lost horses which other horse thieves had carried away and for the loss of other stock missed by the settlers of Jefferson, Rock, Dane, and Dodge Counties.

The Finches knew how to change the appearance of the horses by staining or bleaching them and by grooming their manes and tails. For their stolen horses they seemed to have found ready markets. Rolling Prairie, east of Beaver Dam, was a favorite trade center and some markets were found even as far away as Chicago.

The horses which they themselves rode were the best specimens of frontier horseflesh. In a horse race once held at Janesville a Finch pony out-distanced all others.

Because of their widely heralded misdeeds and hard-riding the Finches were feared by many settlers who never really knew them. Pioneer mothers are said to have quieted their children at night by saying, when there was a rush of wind, "Be quiet. The Finches are riding by." That was enough to quiet the naughtiest child.

A country blacksmith, who shod a horse for a stranger who came to his smithy, refused to take any pay for his work, for he thought that he recognized his customer as one of the Finch band.

A FINCH HORSE TRADE

(Rustic Poem)

Of sturdy pioneers one hears so much,
"Honest, hard-working, thrifty," and such.

Sometimes a man who was hardly a saint
Would rustle horses, then disguise them with paint.

A farmer west of town owned a valuable pair.
One morning the better horse was not there.

"Lost, strayed, or stolen," the news went around,
And the beautiful animal could not be found.

Spring's work coming on, he must have a team.
There came to Black Earth some "dealers" 'twould seem.

He went to the barn where the horses were sold.
There were the "traders," so rough and so bold.

They had a fine horse, not the least bit shy,
So much like the "lost one"; this nag he would buy.

"Almost identical" but no white strip on her face.
As he led her home she seemed to know the place.

When she shed her hair later on in the year,
Sure enough! The white strip did reappear.

(It is believed that the horse thieves who visited
Black Earth at this time might have been the Finches.)

HORSE THIEVES CAUGHT

One of the descendants of a Lake Koshkonong pioneer family said, in speaking of the troublesome Finch clan, "I have heard my father speak of their depredations. In his day they were greatly feared and were at the height of their power. I've heard him tell that one time some of these horse thieves were caught and tied to trees in the woods on the old Haight farm. Their hats were placed on their heads and the farmers entertained themselves by shooting pellets through their head gear, the sport being to make sieves of the hats without wounding the desperadoes. When the 'fun' was over they were released." Evidently the Finches were thoroughly frightened, for after this incident the settlers of that particular neighborhood experienced no further trouble with them. However, their horse and cattle stealing in Jefferson County extended into the Lake Ripley and Red Cedar Lake regions. They were said to have sometimes concealed their stolen horses in a swamp near Red Cedar Lake.

THE LASSO

The first use of the lasso in the history of Jefferson County can probably be credited safely to the Finch gang. At least two members of the original crowd were very adept with the rope and took delight in terrifying the law abiding citizenry with demonstrations. It was an accomplishment which they found useful in their horse raiding. The lasso furnished an easy means for capturing horses or cattle, causing little confusion, thus lessening the chances of stampedes. It is said that members of the gang asserted that they had learned to lasso "down south." Inasmuch as the South, as it was then, knew nothing of the lasso and the wild West had yet to see its first cowboy, the Finch statement is doubtlessly on a par with the rest of their remarks as far as veracity is concerned.

THE BAVARIANS

In the Beaver Dam River and the Horicon Marsh regions in Dodge County the early settlers were stout Bavarian and German farmers. These settlers did much quarreling and fighting among themselves but were ever ready to band together against a common enemy. All were handy with shotgun or rifle and were always on the alert for troublesome Indians or cattle thieves. The Finch bandits and their cohorts generally left these settlers strictly alone. On only one occasion did they manage to steal a few horses. Even then they did not get away with the stock without injuries. The Bavarians were "bad medicine" to raiders and thieves and they were given a wide berth. Horse stealing in Jefferson County, however, was easier and not so dangerous.

THE CAMP MEETING

Another little story says that a traveling preacher was officiating at a camp meeting near one of the Jefferson County settlements. As usual, a rough platform had been built of logs, and seats had been provided for the congregation by felling tree trunks and laying other logs upon these.

People had driven with their teams and had come on horseback, some from considerable distances, to be at the revival. Among those gathered there were a number of roughnecks who had come for the sole purpose of "raising hell" and annoying the preacher and those gathered to hear the word of God.

While the meeting progressed, a stranger rode up on horseback, tied his mount to a nearby tree, and came in and sat down on one of the rear seats. He was a handsome fellow and the eyes of some of the girls present were soon upon him. Soon the rowdies, all more or less drunk, began to create a disturbance. Thereupon the stranger arose, walked over to them, and drawing a pistol from his belt quickly cowed them. He marched them to the front of the platform and forced them to kneel during the continuance of the meeting.

It is said that several "got religion" right then and there. After the close of the meeting the stranger rode away. Some of those present insisted that they recognized him as one of the Finches.

THE CHARIVARI

A party of pioneers (men and boys) were preparing one night to serenade a newly married couple residing somewhere north of Lake Mills.

The Charivari was not an uncommon occurrence in the countryside in the early days. The young people had assembled in the neighborhood of the log cabin and were banging away and having a "rare old time" with their tin pans, kettles, guns, "bull fiddles," and other terrific noise-making devices when three men on horseback suddenly rode into their midst, firing pistols. Someone recognized them as the Finches, and the entire serenading company fled with the greatest of haste into the timber.

It was afterward said that the newly married neighbor was a henchman of the Finches and that they had learned of the proposed serenade and had come to his rescue.

It was a long time before any serenades were again held for newly wedded couples in that "neck of the woods."

THE WRESTLING MATCH AT THE FORD

Jack, or John, Finch was widely known for his prowess as a rough and tumble wrestler in days when every country district had its champion. He was one of the least abnoxious of the twelve fighting members of his family. He had a farm in Rock County and was not known to have been involved in any horse stealing raids.

Jack was a man of great strength and had downed most of the fighters of the country around in wrestling matches and in trials of strength. He once placed on his shoulder a great hand-hewn mill beam and walked away with it. No other two or three men could do more than lift the beam off the ground.

A story of Jack's wrestling exploits has come down to us. One day when he had ridden down to the place known as the Indian Ford of the Rock River and was about to make the ride across, he saw a man whom he recognized as a rather renowned wrestler of the Sugar River country in Green County. The two men had met before but had never been pitted against each other in a match. Jack Finch hailed the other man and after a few minutes of conversation, called back and forth across the stream, a challenge was given and accepted. The two men tied their mounts, each on his own side of the bank, and waded out to meet the other in midstream, where the water was almost waist deep. Spectators who arrived and viewed the fight said that it was a mighty struggle.

They quickly came to grips and struggled back and forth in the water. The stones in the bed of the stream were slippery and the footing uncertain, but the two were well matched. Neither was able to throw the other man. Several times they disengaged and took new holds. It was a fair fight. After more than an hour of fighting the two men shook hands and decided to call it a day. Each untied his mount and went his way.

THE EARL VELVET

Early in the 1840's, with settlements springing up between Milwaukee and Madison, important trade routes were established between these two communities. Along these routes were driven the freight wagon trains, many times carrying valuable loads of merchandise to outposts in the Wisconsin wilderness.

A. R. Earl, farmer, millwright, carpenter, and joiner, one of the most important pioneer landowners in Aztalan Township, had told that the next wagon train was to bring a bolt of velvet imported from England for Mrs. Earl, the former Louisa Waterbury. One of the Finch boys overheard the remark, and when the wagon train reached Aztalan---or Jefferson---(the stories conflict) the light-fingered Finch located the shipments headed for that community and under the very nose of the purchaser he made off with the Earl velvet. He was probably aided to some extent by the equally light-fingered members of his clan and, no doubt, by cleverly plying the wagoners with drinks. There was much to suspect but nothing to prove, and the Finches acquired merely another smirch on a checkered record.

The incident might have died with nothing but a cloud of suspicion to mark its passing had not some of the women of the Finch family, most of whom were excellent horsewomen, suddenly "blossomed out" in velvet riding habits of the material and color consigned to the wagon train for Mrs. Earl. Hot words were passed, it is said, and threats of reprisal were made, but the anecdote ended without definitely stating if anyone around Aztalan besides the Finches were owners of velvet riding habits in those days.

Years after the Finch clan had become a more or less distorted memory in Jefferson County,

settlers would warn their children never to try "finching" something that wasn't theirs. (This is an interesting word, used probably as a provincialism of the word "filch," flavored unwittingly by associating it with the name "Finch.")

THE FINCH WOMEN

True to the traditions of romance, where bold, bad men were matched by women of great beauty and daring, considerable legend has grown up around the women of the Finches. They are said to have been dark and beautiful. One of them is specifically referred to because of her ability to ride a horse bareback "as well as any man."

The Finches were known to be as violent in their love affairs as in their living. A girl named Cooper bore one of the Finch boys three illegitimate children by the time she was nineteen years old. She was a comely lass. Some of the Finches were good dancers, and she was said to have first met her lover at a country shakedown. She lived south of Waterloo on what is now the London--Waterloo road, and her family were apparently of the madcap type like the Finches. The Cooper cabin was close to the old cemetery which is still to be seen from this road. There is no record of the eventual fate of the Coopers.

More frequently than not the Finch women did the farming, planting, and harvesting. They carried on all their manual labor in a way reminiscent of hill-billy or Indian standards. It is puzzling where they learned their theory of operation. Their crops were mainly corn, pumpkins, and some small grain. It is thought that they stole most of their needed supplies.

PATSY FINCH, HORSEWOMAN

Patsy Finch (her name is thought to have been Patricia) was reputed to have been one of the most attractive among the beautiful Finch women. She was, like others of her female relatives, a very skillful and fearless horsewoman and could ride bareback as well as in a saddle. She had flashing blue-black eyes and long black hair, which streamed out behind her as she travelled down the road on some errand. The settlers liked her, and despite the bad reputation of some other members of her family, no one ever molested Patsy.

Often her rides were little errands of mercy to aid some sick member of a settler's family. With the young men she was a favorite and was in great demand at country dances where young and old tripped to the tunes of "Money Musk" or "Comin' Thru The Rye." Some of the lads wanted Patsy for a helpmeet and sought her hand. She finally disappeared from her home neighborhood in Jefferson County and was seen no more. Conjecture was that she married a reputable Milwaukee merchant of means and had raised a nice family.

A SETTLER'S BOAST

A man named Budd settled on some wild land near Oakland Creek, P. O., near Red Cedar Lake in Jefferson County, built a cabin, and began to clear some of the land for the raising of crops. His family consisted of two daughters, the elder about sixteen years old. Soon after establishing his home he learned of the wild and lawless Finch tribe from neighboring settlers. Budd, however, felt himself secure as he had a rifle and a shotgun and was reputed to be a dead shot with either.

Although the Finches bothered some settlers in his vicinity at this time, driving away some of their horses and cattle, they left Budd alone. Due to this he is said to have done some talking, telling others what he would do to any of the gang if they came near his home. When they failed to appear in the region Budd continued to "talk loud," vowing that he was used to handling robbers of their kind in Indiana, where he had formerly lived.

The following spring the Finches are said to have sent him a friendly warning to close his mouth, but he would not stop his boastful remarks concerning them, stating that if he had any sheriff authority he would soon clear the countryside of the "Finch scum."

One day in the spring when he was engaged in planting corn or potatoes in his new field, three young men rode up to his cabin and inquired of his whereabouts from the elder daughter. Before Budd could reach his loaded rifle, which he had left leaning against the trunk of a tree, he was surrounded and found himself gazing into the muzzles of three leveled guns.

The men tied the now frightened settler to the trunk of a large tree and, standing at a

distance from him, began firing well-aimed shots into the trunk all about him---near his head and near his body. After thus amusing themselves with the unfortunate man, who was by this time half-dead with fear, they unloaded his rifle, released him, and rode away. Not a word was spoken during Budd's capture and ordeal. He slumped to the ground, and it was sometime before he could get to his cabin.

After this happening it was reported that Budd was more or less at the beck and call of the Finches, warning them of attempts to kill or capture them and aiding them in other ways.

Both of Budd's daughters are said to have later "married" members of the Finch tribe and to have raised families in Rock and Jefferson Counties.

THE FINCH BURYING GROUND

The Finch burying ground near Fort Atkinson does much to discredit the assumption that the Finches had no pride in caring for their dead.

Although Lake Mills was the Finch stronghold following their uprooting from Koshkonong in 1840, the only marked Finch grave in Rock Lake cemetery is that of Eustis Finch, 1820-1859. It is not known whether this Finch was one of the active outlaws or one of the more respectable members of the family. Many of them lie buried in a little old cemetery on highway 26, the road between Fort Atkinson and Koshkonong. The road cuts through the cemetery. On the east side of the road there is a small pond known as Pritchard's Pond, and the graves are just opposite, on the west side of the pavement.

The Finches customarily buried their dead in comparative secrecy. The fact was rarely known when a Finch died unless, as time elapsed, the word seeped out.

One time when one of their family had died a young boy was sent on horseback to Lake Mills to tell the citizenry, "Come and get Pa. He's dead. Come and get him in a wagon!" The deceased member may have been Eustis Finch. On the other hand, this incident may have occurred at a too early date for this Finch to have been the one in question.

GOLD-RUSH DAYS

In 1849 hundreds of young men from the farms and towns of Wisconsin went to join in the rush for free gold in California. Some went by wagon train across the Great Plains and others down the Mississippi River by boat, there taking passage on sailing ships for the Eldorado of the West.

Young men leaving for the "Gold Diggings" by the overland route went in wagons and were armed, equipped, and provisioned in true pioneer style, carrying with them a short rifle, a bowie knife, revolvers, a pack of cards, a flask of whiskey for a turn of the ague, and a prospect of gold dust. It was said that the proposal was made to send a fleet of widows and maids to the gold regions, but the great objection was that they would immediately steer for the Isle of Man. The Finch women, however, seemed content to stay at home.

These hectic days of '49, during the California gold rush, found several Finches in their glory. There is no record of any incidents they may have encountered enroute. An Ed Finch was named as one adventurer who tried some unsuccessful "fast ones" at Sutter's Creek, where the first discovery of gold was reported. As far as it is known, no Finch ever returned from California.

It is of interest to note also a few of the hints which were commonly "preached" to those adventuresome emigrants headed for California. "Remember, the earth is not very deep in those parts and it may be very dangerous to dig too deep." "That to a hungry man, a good sized potato is worth all the California 'carats.'"

"NOT HUNG YET"

There were Finches in the Civil War. The Jefferson County History records a Finch listed in a Watertown volunteer Company and a later edition gives the name as Fitch. It is said that there were Finches listed in Companies recruited at Fort Atkinson and Janesville. Records taken from the "Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865" show the following Finch enlistments:

Charles B. Finch - Koshkonong - enlisted Feb. 11, '65 - M.O. Nov. 8, '65 - Co.H. - 49 reg. inf.

Corp. Charles C. Finch - Brighton - Co. D. 34 reg. inf.

Charles B. Finch - Koshkonong - Co.H. - 21st enlisted Aug. 14, '62. Disch. Feb. 13, '63 - disability.

Gilbert Finch - (1st Lieutenant) - White-water - Rank from Nov. 24, '64. Enlisted July 2, '61. Capt. June 18, '66, not mustered; wounded Port Hudson.M.O. May 28, '66.

Roldon Finch - Koshkonong - Co. H. - 21st inf. M.O. June 8, '65.

However, many enlisting from this section of the state by the name of Finch were not related to the Finch tribe of whom we write.

The members of the Finch family might well have earned their "fighting" name because of merited service as soldiers in the Black Hawk and Civil War.

The late E. B. Heimstreet, Civil War veteran and former custodian of the G. A. R. room in the state capitol, told of a war incident

which happened when he was a drummer boy in a New York regiment which had just marched into Washington. Heimstreet's regiment came to rest alongside the troops from Michigan. One of the Michigan men made it his business to find out from what state the adjacent regiments had come. When he found a Wisconsin troop, the soldier guffawed loudly and said, "When you get back home tell them they haven't hung Finch yet."

The end of the Civil War marked the end of the Finches as a family of importance in this section.