# MID-AMERICA

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Entered as second class matter August 7, 1929, at the post office at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of March 3, 1879

Verein, St. Louis, Mo. The value of these files cannot easily be overestimated. Many contributions of the character of the "Notes" of Rev. B. Bartels on early Catholic settlements and parishes, competently written by the pioneer founders of these settlements and parishes, appeared in the issues of these two widely circulating dailies and weeklies. In 1931 the present writer approached Mr. Frederick P. Kenkel, K. S. G., K. H. S., chief of the Central Bureau, with a suggestion for the raising of a fund whereby a competent indexer of the contents of these two sets of files could be put to work on this extremely valuable source material for the ecclesiastical and civil history of the Middle West.

Clinton County, with its exceptional record of having been settled almost completely by Catholics and with its development through a century of rural life and strong parochial organization, lacks to this day a history of the Catholic Church in that County. This is all the more regrettable since the parish histories of that County appeared too late to secure entry into the St. John's Orphan Edition of the *History of the Parishes of the Diocese of Belleville,* edited by the present writer and published by Joseph N. Buechler, Belleville, Illinois, 1919.

It is a hope to be cherished that the pastors and laity of Clinton County organize a really dynamic historical association to do justice to their Catholic ancestors, to themselves and to posterity by bringing about in this centennial year the preparation and eventual publication of such a history of their County. The garnering of all the source documents relating to the history of the Diocese of Belleville, and the publication of this fundamental source-material present another task, delay of which will involve far greater research labors and even irreparable losses. Historically the Diocese of Belleville presents many dark areas, either partly or totally unexplored, which forbid to this day the preparation of a critical general history of the diocese. All contributions to the history of the Diocese of Belleville, from the day of Father Bartels to this day, are the precious gifts of individual interest in a sacred cause, and of the initiative and research of the writers thereof. Thanks to their labors a more intelligent estimate and appreciation of our material and spiritual possession of this day is possible.

FREDERICK BEUCKMAN

Belleville, Ill.

## THE MARQUETTE CABIN AT THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS FAIR

Visitors to the Chicago Century of Progress Fair are being attracted in numbers to a little structure of logs which stands immediately south of the Lincoln buildings at Twenty-sixth Street and the lake. It was erected by the Illinois Catholic Historical Society, publisher of MID-AMERICA, as a replica in symbol of the cabin in which Father Marquette lived for several months on the site of Chicago. The cabin bears this inscription: "More than Two Hundred and Fifty Years ago during the Winter of 1674-1675 Father Jacques Marquette of the Society of Jesus lived in a cabin such as this on the banks of the south branch of the Chicago river where Damen Avenue now meets it. Father Marquette and his companions, Pierre Porteret and Jacques Largilier were the first white residents of Chicago. Erected by the Illinois Catholic Historical Society."

As Father Marquette's historical relation to Chicago is not always clearly understood, it may be well to set the matter down briefly in definite statements.

1. As a member of the Jolliet exploring party of 1673, Marquette was one of the discoverers of the Chicago Portage, the physical factor mainly responsible for the existence of Chicago.

2. As a member of the same party, he was one of the first group of white men known to have passed through the Chicago River, as the marker on the Michigan Avenue Link Bridge commemorates. Other white men may have preceded them in the locality; but when they came or who they were is not of record.

3. Marquette on his return to the Chicago River, December 4, 1674, occupied for a week a cabin built for him at its mouth, a spot now to be identified approximately with the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street. This is the first known human habitation on the site of Chicago, the missionary with his two companions being the first known residents thereon.

4. During the period, December 12, 1674-March 30, 1675, Marquette was in camp on a spot "two leagues" up the river from its mouth. Here he occupied a second cabin, the one reproduced on the Fair Grounds. A curious misreading of some words in the missionary's Journal has given rise to the impression that this cabin was already standing when Marquette arrived, it being the property, as alleged, of a trader in the region, Pierre Moreau. The words in question and their context afford no reasonable





ground for any such interpretation. The cabin here referred to was not Marquette's but Moreau's, which was located some forty-five miles away.

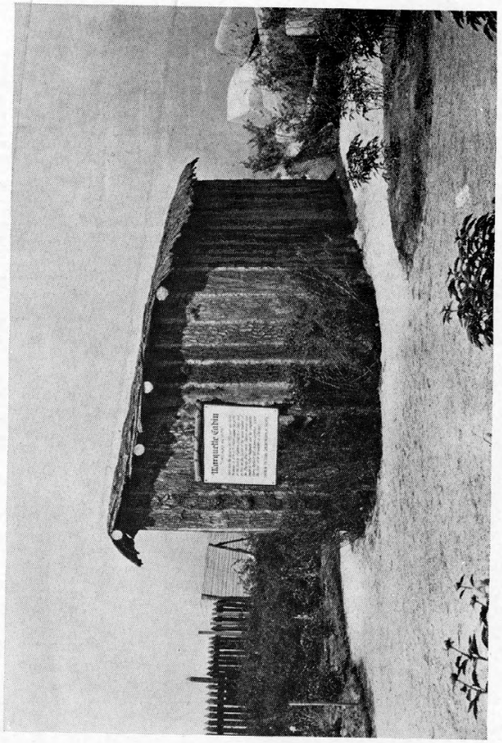
5. Marquette's activities on the site of Chicago belong to a period when the locality was a French possession. The first recorded resident thereon under the American flag was the Catholic mulatto, Jean Baptiste Point de Saible. He is rightly accounted the first permanent settler of modern Chicago.

How Marquette spent a hundred and eight days in his second winter camp on the site of Chicago, he has told us himself in a Journal written on the spot. This remarkable narrative is the earliest extant piece of writing produced in the locality which is now Chicago. It is still preserved, a precious possession of St. Mary's College, Montreal. It was a hard winter that Marquette passed in the little cabin which his men put up for him in the wilderness, and yet as he wrote bravely in his Journal "he passed it pleasantly." On December 15 he said Mass, at which his men assisted, the first religious service of record in the history of Chicago. To his cabin came occasional visitors, friendly Indians with food, and a French doctor who was living with the natives some forty-five miles away.

Marquette had brought along with him tobacco and other articles with which to win the good will of the Indians or barter for the necessaries of life. A quantity of tobacco was traded for "three fine robes of ox skin." These, says Marquette, "were very useful to us during the winter." On one occasion he gave his Indian visitors a number of presents—a hatchet, two knives, three clasp knives, glass beads and two double mirrors. The provisions secured by his men or brought in by the Indians or sent him by French traders living among the Indians included corn, blueberries, pumpkins and buffalo tongue. One thing Marquette absolutely refused the Indians who pressed him for it. He would give them no gun powder, for, as he wrote, "we sought to restore peace everywhere and we did not wish them to begin war with the Miami." Such are some of the glimpses we get of Chicago life as it was experienced by the first resident here two hundred and fifty-eight years ago. A writer on early Chicago history has put the matter pointedly: "If plain living and high thinking be the ideal life, no locality ever launched its recorded career more auspiciously than did Chicago in the winter of 1674-1675."

Nowhere is the memory of Father Marquette more alive today than in Chicago. By ordinance of the City Council, December 4, the day on which he beached his canoe at the river mouth, is celebrated annually as "Marquette Day." Very recently his memory has been once more evoked and in striking fashion. This was on the occasion of the formal opening with elaborate ceremony of the Lakes-to-the-Gulf Waterway, an accomplishment which realizes Louis Jolliet's dream of two hundred and sixty years ago. The most significant feature of the celebration was the arrival during the dedication ceremonies of two heavily laden Mississippi River barges, the first to make the long haul from New Orleans to Chicago. A pageant depicting the first arrival in Chicago waters of the French explorers Jolliet, Marquette, LaSalle and Tonti, was staged on the deck of the U. S. training ship, *Wilmette,* where the other ceremonies of the occasion also took place. The pageant concluded impressively with the appearance of Marquette praying with outstretched hands for the Almighty's blessing on a sore pressed and chastened people. Secretary of War Dern, Speaker of the House Rainey, Mayor Kelly and G. W. Rossetter, President of the Chicago Association of Commerce, paid tribute in their addresses to the name of Father Marquette.

The Marquette cabin will attract an increasing number of visitors as the great spectacle of the Century of Progress Exposition continues on its way. Its interior shows furnishings and objects suggestive of Father Marquette's historic sojourn in Chicago as he pictured it himself in his Journal.




MARQUETTE CABIN
Erected by the Illinois Catholic Historical Society at
A Century of Progress, Chicago, 1933

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