

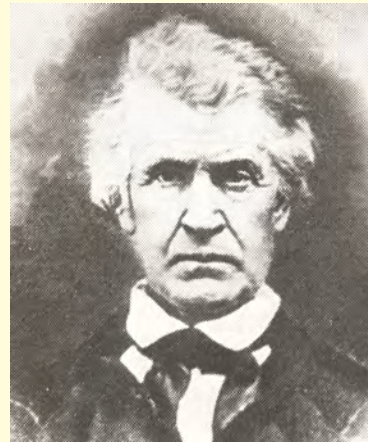
The Bullen Family & The Western Emigration Company

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Among the prominent early settlers in the Town of Hannibal was the Bullen family. Central to this story was John Bullen, Sr., born in Ware, MA, on May 20, 1783, and his son John Bullen, Jr., born in Oneida Co., NY, on May 16, 1803. The John Bullen, Sr., served as a Captain in the War of 1812. Father, son and other family members moved to Hannibal in 1821, where they became personally involved in church, business, political and fraternal affairs.

Members of the Bullen family were quite active in the early days of the Congregational Church in Hannibal. John Bullen, Sr., was a singer of application for the incorporation of the Congregational Society and often read the sermon on Sunday.

Various members of the Bullen family were engaged in merchandising, farming, milling, lumbering and the manufacture of potash from which they amassed a good fortune. Goods were



John Bullen, Sr.
(1783-1850)

shipped from Oswego via the Oswego-Erie Canal system to Albany. John Bullen, Sr., also owned canal boats. Hastings Bullen operated a store on the southwest corner of the Village Square where Cook's Manufacturing Jewelers was recently located.

John Bullen, Sr., made an unsuccessful bid for New York Assemblyman in 1822. He and other family members held various local political offices. In addition, in 1824, John Bullen, Sr., held the position of Commissioner of Common Schools.

John Bullen, Sr., and his brother David were instrumental in forming the first Masonic Lodge in Hannibal in 1824. John was the first Master and David was the first Senior Warden.

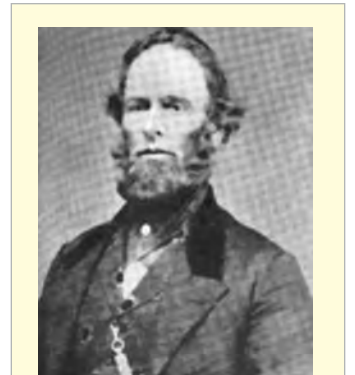
In the early 1830's, stimulated by glowing accounts of available land in the West from travelers, local people began to develop serious thoughts about emigration. This prompted a dinner gathering in December of 1834, to discuss the topic. After some lively discussion, it was decided to form a company to facilitate Western emigration. Accordingly, a committee was appointed to draft a company constitution to be presented at the next meeting.

That meeting was widely attended by members of the community who heartily

endorsed the proposed constitution and the proposition to establish a company to facilitate western emigration. At a subsequent meeting held on February 20, 1835, the Western Emigration Company was officially formed. Rev. Peter Woodin, pastor of the Hannibal Baptist Church, was elected Chairman and John Bullen, Jr., was elected Secretary.

According to the provisions of the company constitution, \$8000 in capital was to be raised by selling shares of stock at \$10 each. The capital thus raised would be used to invest in western real estate for a new community. The stock of the Western Immigration Company proved to be popular, with people of all economic means investing.

Subsequently, enough funds were raised so that an exploratory committee consisting of Waters Towsley, Sidney Roberts, and Charles W. Turner could be appointed to seek and stake out a suitable claim along the western shore of Lake Michigan in the name of the Western Emigration Company. The committee was entrusted with \$2800 of company money for investment and allowed one



John Bullen, Jr.
(1803-1884)

Written by

Lowell C. Newvine,
Hannibal Town and
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dollar a day, plus travel expenses.

The three men left Hannibal amid much fanfare on March 25, 1835. They sailed by way of Lake Erie to Detroit, traveled overland to Chicago and then planned to go to Milwaukee. Since only Indian trails existed between the two municipalities, the men set out by land following the Lake Michigan shoreline. However, after a short distance, they were able to hail a passing sail craft and got a ride to Milwaukee.

In Milwaukee, they found that property values were too high to afford purchasing enough real estate for a colony. Therefore, they concentrated their effort to the south where they soon entered into negotiations with existing claim holders at the mouth of the Root River, located on the site of the current city of Racine, WI. However, negotiations bogged down resulting in a stalemate whereupon, Towsley and Roberts returned to Hannibal for consultation with the company while Turner remained to look after the unsettled purchase.

At a subsequent stockholders' meeting in Hannibal, general dissatisfaction was expressed in the performance of the committee leading to its dismissal. John Bullen, Jr. was appointed sole agent of the company and as such, proceeded, in the company of his brother William and E.C. Hart, to Root River.

Upon arrival, he dismissed Turner and unsuccessfully tried to complete the land deal. Realizing that settlement in this area was not to be, he decided to explore the country to the south. In early June 1835, the group arrived at the mouth of Pike Creek, now the city of Kenosha. After surveying the area, it was determined that the site held potential for growth of a town and the development of a lake port for shipping. As a result, claims were made on behalf of the company.

Bullen had the land surveyed into streets and lots for development of a lake port for

shipping. As a result, claims were made on behalf of the company.

Bullen had the land surveyed into streets and lots for development. As soon as news reached Hannibal that a site in Wisconsin had been established for settlement, immediate plans were made for emigration. About fifteen families from Hannibal made the trip in the summer and fall of 1835.

On July 10, 1835, a ship arrived at Pike Creek with 50,000 feet of lumber purchased by John Bullen, Jr. The next delivery of cargo, in August of 1835, consisted of merchandise to stock the store that Bullen had built.

As the settlers faced their first winter in Wisconsin, 32 persons comprised the entire population of Pike Creek. Meanwhile, John Bullen, Jr., and his brother William had returned to Oswego and purchased a 100-ton schooner, "Martin Van Buren". They proceeded to load the ship with seeds, provisions and implements and then dispatched it to Pike Creek. On his return west in the spring of 1836, John Bullen, Jr., purchased a herd of cattle in southern Illinois and drove them overland to Pike Creek. He arrived on May 8, the same day that the "Martin Van Buren" sailed into port. Immediately after this, emigration to Pike Creek increased rapidly.

As for the Western Emigration Company, it proved to be an unprofitable venture and was dissolved in December 1836. It was created in good faith, but was plagued by bad policy resulting in the benefit of a few and a disappointment for many.

In February 1841, the settlement of Pike Creek was incorporated into a village under the name of Southport. In 1850, the village of Southport became the city of Kenosha. The name Kenosha, is the Native American name for Pike. Since that time, Kenosha has grown

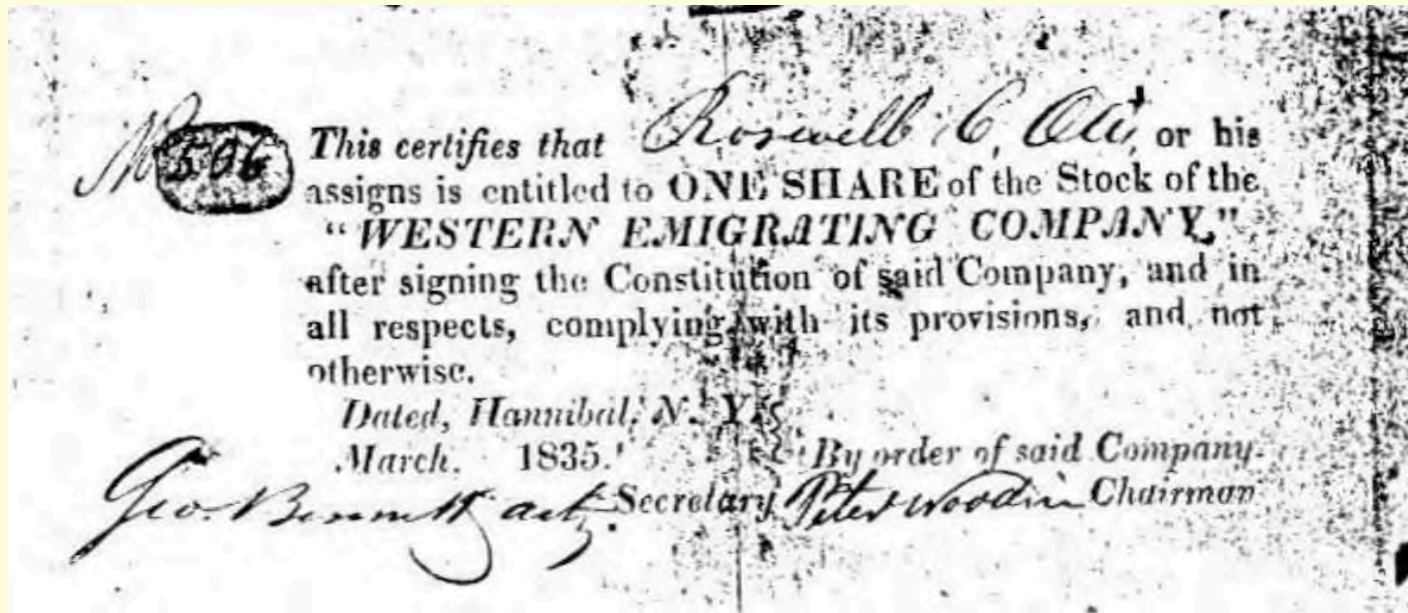
to be Wisconsin's fourth largest city with a population in excess of 100,000 people.

John Bullen, Jr., died on May 9, 1884, and was buried in the Green Ridge Cemetery in Kenosha, WI. An imposing monument erected to his memory just inside the Sheridan Road gate has the following inscription: "In memory of John Bullen who located Kenosha, June 12, 1835, and was one of its founders."

As for John Bullen, Sr., he went west in 1837, traveling part way by canal boat. A fellow passenger was Brigham Young, who was on his way to meet Joseph Smith and other Mormons. John, Sr. settled about 20 miles west of Pike Creek on the Fox River. Here he built a large house which also served as an inn. A few years later, he was commissioned a Brigadier General of the Territorial Militia.

In 1843, he moved to Southport as it was known at the time. Here he operated an inn later known as the National House. He was an ardent temperance worker and very active in the work of the Underground Railroad. His hotel served as a convenient stopping point for fugitive slaves being smuggled into Canada.

His daughter Caroline married Joseph V. Quarles and was the mother of US Senator J.V. Quarles of Wisconsin. Another daughter, Sophia, married William Warner who was US Senator from Missouri. John Bullen, Sr., died in 1850, and like his son, is buried in Green Ridge Cemetery in Kenosha, WI.



Western Emigration Co. Stock Certificate - 1835

Questions:

1. What types of jobs or business interests did the Bullen family have prior to the Western Emigration Company?
2. What was the Western Emigration Company's goals?
3. What background do you think the Bullens had that would make this new business, the Western Emigration Company, successful?
4. Who were the stockholders?
5. Why do you think this business had such positive support?
6. What were the emigrating trends to the United States and to the west at this time? What was the draw to the west?
7. What obstacles did the Bullens run into with this company?
8. Why do you think it didn't make any money?
9. Could this type of business exist today in the United States? Explain why.