

Macajah Revels Camped at a Stream of Water By Fabu

In Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin

there is a notation that a Black man
Macajah Revels, born in 1800 on the Cherokee reservation
migrated to Dane county and camped at a stream of water
eighteen miles north of the village of Madison.
Macajah traveled on to buy land elsewhere.

There is no record of physical description; light, dark or medium
what he accomplished or who his parents were.

In 1800, a Black man was both an oddity and invisible
but the land welcomed him.

The land was cheap, fertile with plenty
there was schooling for children and protection for escaped slaves
so Macajah could rest briefly.

Who remembers Macajah Revels, Black settler in the 1800's
Who camped at a refreshing stream
Eighteen miles north of the village of Madison
but moved on, maybe knowing there would be no welcome in Madison.
Who remembers that Black people came to Wisconsin
to be free?

Arriving Free in the Green Land

by Fabu

When we came walking, feet sore, covered in slavery dust
masters' whip and lash still throbbing hot across our scars
troubling our minds, dimming our hopes
we saw the green land and sighed.

Wagons carrying our sick, full of moaning
aged, little ones, mamas with sucking babes
escaped or freshly purchased
only this time purchased for family by family.

All of us looking for newness, we wondered where
the first ones had gone. Remains of native people forced away
from these abundant waters and stretched our lands
still called Ho-Chunk names.

Cousins paused then traveled on up to Canada
not trusting freedom within US borders
we distrusted too, but our bones begged for rest.
We fought snow and ice thinking long about
our family fighting snow and ice further north.

Languages spun like spinning wheels round our ears
from poor white immigrants also desperate
for farmland and freedom. We didn't hear the dreaded
southern cracker voice, so we settled the green land.

Whether we looked back south or forward north
we had to anchor ourselves in the present
praying for a Midwest welcome that our color be accepted
inside hearts willing to know we are people too.

South Madison
by Fabu

Cultures
Languages
Spice and strain

Elders
Children
Joy despite pain

Churches
Schools
Businesses remain

Devoted
To families
And equal justice

On Park Street
In South Madison
Where all are welcomed.