

J. (JOHN) BARTLETT (BARTLEY) RUNEY

My name is John Bartlett Runey; although I understand that various historical accounts have given my name as Bartley Runey. Regardless of that, most area historians recognize me as being the first settler to this area in 1841. But let's start at the beginning.

I was born in Frederick County, Maryland. I married Margaret Garnett in 1815 who was also from Frederick County, Maryland. Our first child, Susannah, was born in 1816 – I was only 19 years old. Three years later, I moved my family to Patterson, Hampshire County, Virginia. While there we had three more children: Jane Catherine in 1819; Eliza Ellen in 1821; and Rezin (Reason) in 1823.

Next, it was on to Licking County, Ohio. I operated a mill there and later purchased a farm in Preble County. During our time in Ohio, more children were born: Greenwill in 1825; Mary in 1827; Catherine in 1830 and Garrett in 1832.

We still weren't done moving. In 1835, we had moved to Goshen, Indiana. Susannah and Eliza were married there. Margaret and I had two more daughters, Clara, born in 1838 and Lily Clarys in 1839.

In the spring of 1841, with a covered wagon and a team, Margaret and I, along with our children (ranging in age from 21 to 3) moved on – stopping in Rockford, Illinois. We were accompanied by our married daughter, Susannah, her husband and their two children. However, we could not find living quarters there, and so continued further on to Janesville, WI. Our daughter, Eliza and her husband were already settled there. Susannah and her family remained in Janesville, where they became neighbors with Eliza's family.

Then in the fall of 1841, I journeyed on to the Rutland area, where I made the first claim, built the first house and became the first white settler in the area. My family joined me in the spring of 1842.

Our home was a log house. In 1843, a frame addition was added and it became known as the "Pioneer Hotel". The number of settlers to the area grew rapidly. Quite often new settlers to the area would stay at our place while they built their own homes. It was located near the junction of the mail route from Madison to Janesville and the road from Mineral Point to Milwaukee; known as the "old lead trail". The place was a favorite stopping point for the teamsters hauling lead. Often 10 to 14 teams of oxen could be seen pulling one stalled wagon out of the mud near the pioneer tavern.

The first religious services in the area were held there because it was the only place large enough to house the congregation. A circuit minister named Hawks led evening prayers with the early settlers.

My life was filled with the adventure of being a pioneer in a new land. I was blessed with the love of a wife and large family. But, it wasn't in the cards that I would live to be an old man. It was in September, 1846, while returning home from Madison with supplies, that my wagon overturned on a steep hill three miles south of Madison. Following my unfortunate accident, this hill became known as "Breakneck Hill".

As regards my family,

My wife Margaret continued to live on the farm of 168 acres and died there in 1850.

Garrett married Maria Costleman. They had six children – Joseph, Frank, Helen, Willis, Clarence and Clara (twins). Garrett continued to work the farm until his death in 1914.

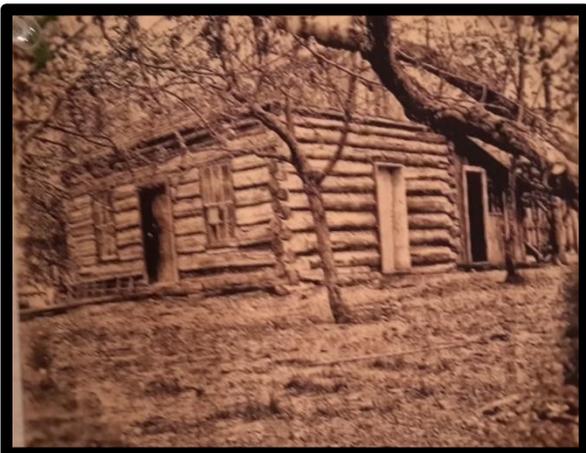
Clara married George Tarrant in 1860. He was a pioneer citizen of Durant, WI where he opened a mercantile business. He was a founder of the Bank of Durand in 1884 and served as its president. He was mayor Durant in 1881-1882 and also served in the State Assembly.

Jane married David Anthony. It was the first marriage held in the area.

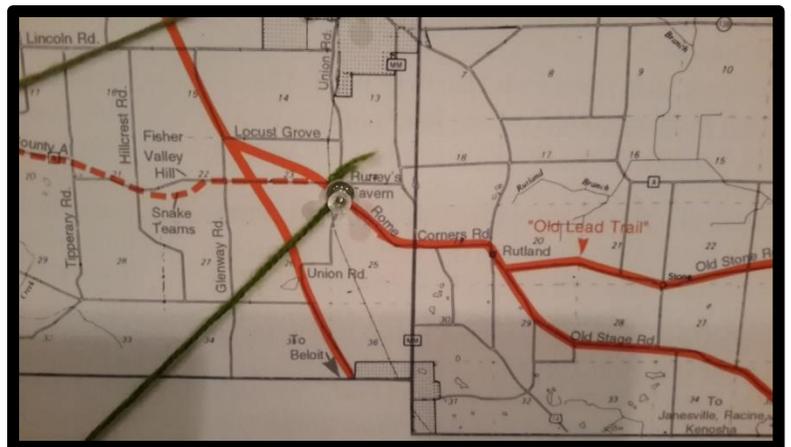
Catherine married Levi Hanan.

Susannah Runey Russell, our eldest daughter, carried forward the tradition of a large family – with a household of nine children.

Mary Runey Fox married into a large Irish family. Their first home was five miles off a highway – a log cabin built in the woods.



A depiction of the early Runey cabin



Location of Runey's Tavern