

BROWN COUNTY OPEN SPACE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN 2001

Prepared by the Brown County Planning Commission and
the Brown County Parks Department

http://www.co.brown.wi.us/Planning/forms/bc_open_space_rec.pdf

DESCRIPTION OF BROWN COUNTY

Historical Settlement

It is believed that human habitation of the area which would one day become Brown County may have existed near the Red Banks area along the east shore of Green Bay as far back as 7000 B.C. Since then, many different Indian tribes have periodically inhabited the lands adjacent to Green Bay and the Fox River. Prior to the 1600s, the Winnebago and Menomonee Indian tribes inhabited what is now Brown County. However, by the mid- 1600s, other tribes, such as the Ottawa, Huron, Fox, Sauk, Potawatomi, and Ojibwa, moved into the area as they were displaced from their ancestral lands further east, and they, in turn, displaced the Winnebago and Menomonee tribes. Jean Nicolet has commonly been credited with being the first European to set foot in what would one day become the State of Wisconsin when he arrived at the Red Banks area in 1634. This event heralded a period of rapid change for the area adjacent to the Bay and the Fox River, as other French explorers and fur traders quickly followed Nicolet. By the mid- 1600s, French missionaries also began to visit the area. These visits eventually became so numerous that in 1671 the first permanent European development, the St. Francis Xavier mission, was established along the Fox River near the De Pere rapids. In 1701, following this initial wave of French explorers, fur traders, and missionaries, the French government established a military stockade called Fort St. Francis in the area along the Bay near the mouth of the Fox River where the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad yards in the City of Green Bay are now located. By 1764, the first recorded settler, Augustin de Langlade, moved to this area and established a trading post.

Eventually, the French presence in this region gave way to British influences. In 1761, the French fort of St. Francis was rebuilt by the British and renamed Fort Edward Augustus. In 1763, France ceded the area to England. By the mid-1780s, the colony established by de Langlade, which would eventually become part of the City of Green Bay, had reached a population of about 50 people. In 1783, England ceded this region to the United States. However, it was not until after the War of 1812 that the British presence was, in turn, supplanted by the American when the original French-Canadian settlers became outnumbered by pioneers from New England and New York. By 1812, the population of the settlement established by de Langlade had increased to about 250 people. In 1816, Fort Edward Augustus was once again rebuilt and renamed Fort Howard. At that point in time, the Fort Howard area was the second largest settlement in Wisconsin. By 1824, the settlement originally founded by de Langlade had reached a population of about 500 people, with an additional 600 troops stationed at Fort Howard. In 1824, Brown County's first county courthouse was founded. In 1854, Green Bay incorporated as a city. Large-scale immigration into this area began by the late 1840s, so that by 1860 about 11,800 people inhabited the area identified today as Brown County.

Location

Brown County was created in 1818 as part of the Michigan Territory, and at that time, it included much of upper Michigan and all of Wisconsin from Lake Michigan to the Wisconsin River and south to Illinois. By the time the Wisconsin Territory was established in 1836, the southern one-third of Brown County had been removed to form new counties in the rapidly growing southeastern portion of the Territory. When

Wisconsin became a state in 1848, the counties of Door, Oconto, Outagamie, and Waupaca were created from Brown County. The following year Kewaunee County was created. By 1853, Brown County was confined to its present size (534 square miles) when Shawano County was created. Brown County was formally established by congress in 1861. Brown County is located in the east-central portion of the State of Wisconsin adjacent to the waters of Green Bay (see Map 1). Kewaunee County lies to the east, Manitowoc and Calumet Counties to the south, Outagamie and Shawano Counties to the west, and Oconto County and the waters of Green Bay to the north. It is bisected by the Fox River, which flows in a northeasterly direction into Green Bay.

Brown County's first communities, Navarino (which later became part of the City of Green Bay) and De Pere were founded in 1829 along the shores of the Fox River near Green Bay. Other early Brown County communities, Astor (which later became part of the City of Green Bay) and Wright (which later became the Village of Wrightstown) were also located along the Fox River. By 1986, Brown County's last jurisdictional change occurred with the incorporation of the Town of Allouez as a village. The 24 municipalities of present-day Brown County include two cities, six villages, and sixteen towns. Since its inception, the City of Green Bay has always been, and today continues to be, Brown County's largest community.