

Macaja Revels Camped at a Stream of Water

by Fabu

In Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin

there is a notation that a Black man

Macaja 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.

Macaja 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 Macaja could rest briefly.

Who remembers Macaja 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?

Macaja Revels was an early Black pioneer, documented in "Black Settlers in Rural Wisconsin"
by Dr. Zachery Cooper, 1977 published by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Fabu, Madison Poet Laureate (2008-2012). This poem was nominated for a Pushcart prize
nominee in poetry, 2013 by Verse Wisconsin.