



**Hops**



**Passenger Pigeon**

## Arrival of the First Settlers

When the first settlers arrived, they did not find an untouched wilderness, but rather a landscape long shaped by Native Americans through practices such as controlled burning. In some areas, it was said that a yoke of oxen—few settlers owned horses at the time—could be driven through the woods due to the lack of underbrush. Large oak trees were abundant, and their acorns supported large populations of **passenger pigeons**, elk, and buffalo. Deer were less common than they are today, due to limited browse, frequent burning, and the presence of wolves.

Some settlers who had passed up the opportunity to settle on the fertile tallgrass prairie to the south believed that if the soil could grow trees, it would also be suitable for crops. Many initially planted successive crops of wheat on the thin topsoil, but over time the soil became exhausted.

In 1848, Harvey Williams entered 200 acres of land along the road from Fox Lake to Portage, located two miles north and one mile west of Pardeeville. He planted one of the first large orchards in the county and built a house on the property, later known as the Jenny Lind Hotel. Morris Sibley Williams also settled on the land and farmed there. One of his notable agricultural ventures was **hops**; he established the first hop yard in the state of Wisconsin, using roots brought from his former home in New York.

Farmers who remained on the land eventually adapted by turning to livestock farming and implementing crop rotation practices.