

# The Father Hennepin Blaze Tree

## *Racine County*

Increase A. Lapham and Philo Hoy, M.D., were among the earliest scientists and natural historians of Wisconsin. In the late 1860s, Dr. Hoy heard that a large oak tree had blown down on a farm near Racine. He and Lapham, who happened to be in the vicinity, went to the farm and watched as the farmer sawed the tree into usable lengths.

In the middle of the tree, not too far above the ground, the two scientists noted a curious phenom-

enon: what appeared to be the mark of an ax inside the tree, as though at some time someone had used it to blaze a trail. Hoy and Lapham counted the rings from the surface of the tree to the blaze. They conjectured that the blaze had been made during the years in which the Jesuit explorer Father Hennepin made his journey up the Mississippi. It is not recorded what happened to the strange blaze mark, but it probably burned up in the farmer's stove.