Figure 12-1. The Town of the Island, located on a map of Wisconsin depicting the Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Fox waterways.
CHAPTER 12:
The Town of the Island

By 1844 much of Doty's career was in a shambles. Doty had risen to the high office of Territorial Governor during the years 1841-44, but his tenure there had not been well received by the people of the state. He had failed in many of his attempts to consolidate power and promote programs. Doty's long time dream of a network of canals and river improvements connecting a string of great cities had collapsed in failure. Many of the cities that he had designed and promoted had remained on paper. A few of his cities had indeed become successes, but due to his financial straights they were now out of his control and in the hands of rival promoters who were often less than sensitive to his visions. From these troubles Doty retreated, to build home for his family on a secluded island that bore his name: Doty Island. A record of his past exploits, the island had been so named when the Menominee Indians, for whom Doty had acted as legal consul, had requested that the beautiful island be given to him as payment for his service to them. Although the place bore his name, he had never received the gift. He had, however, purchased several parcels of land on the island and by 1845 he had control over a substantial portion thereof. Doty commenced construction on what was to be his final residence in Wisconsin, a rustic assemblage of buildings called "The Grand Loggery."
Figure 12-2. View of the village-like collection of structures comprising the "Grand Loggery" on Doty Island: ca. 1850.
Composed of several outbuildings clustered around a main house the complex grew over a period of several years:

"...He added wings to the house and put up little shelters and storage houses and stables as the need arose, until the place resembled a miniature village..."

After having spent many years attempting to design and build cities, it seems highly appropriate that for his final Wisconsin retreat he should build a home for himself in the form of a village or miniature city. Set in an idyllic landscape of mature hardwoods bordering a lakeshore, Doty at last found a village over which he could maintain complete control. As Doty worked on the Loggery he continued to acquire the remainder of the island property. Eventually, Doty platted a town on the site, probably his last design. A print of an 1857 lithograph which Doty had printed in London survives, and is reproduced as figure 12-3. Called the "Town of the Island", prints of this scheme were displayed on the Strand in London where an agent could even sell lots in the romantic and secluded settlement. As early as 1851, Doty had planned a scheme novel for its day: building homes on large five-acre lots for lease to prospective tenants. While Doty had often used the Jeffersonian concept of the "villa in the park" for the siting of public buildings, here it becomes a speculative tool: ready-made gentleman's country residences. Doty's plan for the "Town of the Island" shows such large lot sizes, some as large as the five-acres described above. Unfortunately, Doty does not seem to have found the time to build his speculative "villas in the park."
Figure 12-3. Plan of the Town of the Island, Wisconsin: 1857. State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
In the center of the island Doty has provided a more traditional city plan layout of lots, streets, and blocks. The large lots surround the "city" in a form all too familiar to us today. Passing down the center of the island is "The Avenue," a broad thoroughfare whose terminations literally sloped down into the water to become boat landings. Today this avenue has become a very beautiful boulevard well planted with trees, with the eastern termination still sloping directly down into the water. The idea of "quiet retreat" as first sought by Doty, is still very much in evidence on the island. Doty reserved several parcels along the avenue for public uses, a block for a courthouse square, a block for "College Grounds," and a parcel for a railroad depot. Such provisions, none of which ever came to be, would seem to compromise the charming isolation that many visitors admired there. While Doty's scheme for the island is interesting in its suggestion of speculative country villas, the plan overall has little of the innovative power or spark seen in the plans of Fond du Lac or Madison. His career as an imaginative and prolific designer and promoter of cities was over.