

*The following articles are from the Princeton Centennial  
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### **THREE ERAS IN LIFE OF VILLAGE**

AT THE CONFLUENCE of Rum River and its West Branch in September 1847, stood a forest primeval of white pine that stretched for miles along both branches of the river and its tributaries. The pines were from 100 to 200 feet in height and from 30 inches to five feet in diameter. The saw and the axe of the white man had not yet desecrated this forest. In the forest were deer, partridge and other game hunted by the Chippewas, and packs of big timber wolves which at night were marauders with which to reckon.

Here at the juncture of these two branches of Rum river nine years later the village of Princeton was established. The village for 35 years was the headquarters of the lumbermen who established their camps along Rum river and its tributaries. The white pine forest was north of the village. To the south of it were chiefly deciduous trees.

In 1890 agriculture was taking the place of the lumber industry as the mainstay of the village. Wheat was grown quite extensively in the Princeton area, but potatoes became the most important crop produced. In 1901 and 1902 Princeton became the largest primary potato market in the Northwest. In those years from 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 bushels of potatoes were marketed each season in this village. This crop yielded the farmers on an average from \$100 to \$150 per acre.

By 1926 potato growing in the Princeton area on a large scale had practically ceased. The soil in some instances was becoming exhausted for the production of potatoes; the growers were having difficulty with diseases because they were not using certified seed stock, and the leafhoppers were giving them no end of trouble.

Beginning with 1908 with the establishment of the Co-operative creamery, dairying commenced to be recognized as an important industry in the Princeton area. By 1920 it was conceded to be the mainstay of the village and has since held that position. Now the Princeton Co-operative creamery each year handles a million dollars worth of business.

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### **VILLAGE NAMED AFTER JOHN PRINCE**

PRINCETON WAS NAMED in honor of John S. Prince of St. Paul, one of the men who helped plat the village. Prince built a sawmill in St. Paul in the early 50's. He was the first man to manufacture lumber in that city. Both Prince and

Daniel Stanchfield took logs for merchandise, and outfitted lumbermen going into the north woods.

Rum river derived its name from the Sioux name for Mille Lacs, Me-de-wa-kan, which translated means Spirit lake. The lake was so termed by the Indians because at certain seasons of the year across its waters came a deep booming sound. This booming has been attributed to the explosion of gas on the lakebed, but the Indians believed the sounds came from spirits. When the white men came into the area, they decided the most spirituous liquor was rum, and so christened the river with the shorter name of Rum.

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## **STANCHFIELD EXPEDITION OF 1847 THRILLING**

STANCHFIELD AND HIS two companions, mixed bloods, Severre Bottineau and Charles Manock, set out in a canoe from St. Anthony Falls on September 1, 1847. In an account of his expedition written in 1899 Stanchfield stated that when his exploring party went up the Mississippi river, "Half of the present state of Wisconsin was the hunting ground of the Ojibway Indians, three-fourths of what is now Minnesota was owned by the same people, and all the area of the Dakotas was owned by the Sioux Indians. Since 1847 four states have been carved out of that territory and admitted to the Union".

A timber crew of 20 men came along with Stanchfield and his two companions. They were to advance with the three explorers until the first pine was discovered, and then they were immediately to proceed to hew and bank timber until the return of that party.

The first night the party camped at the mouth of Rum river where it empties into the Mississippi, where Anoka is now situated. The party pushed on the second day about 15 miles. Part of the way portages had to be made. On the third day a tract of scrub pine was discovered about three miles northwest of the present village of Cambridge. The timber crew located there. Stanchfield and his two companions then continued their journey up the Rum river with the intention of exploring it all the way to Mille Lacs lake. The bottomland along the river was wide and the growth of timber was thick, but it was wholly of deciduous species with no pine. The mosquitoes, gnats and flies almost put the party to rout.

On the third day after Stanchfield and his two companions had left the timber crew, he saw on the west shore of Rum river a tributary which he wished to explore. They had passed over 60 miles of the meandering river course above the timber camp. Up to this time no tracts of pine forest had been discovered. The tributary to the Rum river, which they discovered, was what is now called the West branch.

The West branch was heavily timbered with white pine for more than 25 miles, as also were the main river's tributaries. The pine, Stanchfield stated, on each side was from three to six miles wide. Its amount could hardly be estimated.

As Stanchfield and his companions pushed up the main river, he made a practice of climbing a tall tree every six miles and looking from its top across the woods.

A large tributary to the north, entering from the west, had the finest pine he had ever seen. This was what is known later as Bradbury brook. This brook, Stanchfield stated, in its south and north forks were navigable for log driving, with pine on both shores.

Lumbermen state there was no finer white pine in Minnesota than that found on the banks of Bradbury brook.

At Mille Lacs lake Stanchfield found a chief of Ojibways second in authority to Hole-in-the Day. He smoked the pipe of peace with the chief and bestowed presents upon him.

The logging crew, which Stanchfield and his two companions had left behind them, was at work, and in four weeks had a large number of log pine logs down to the Mississippi river. It was then the first of November, and the first snow of the season was falling. Unfortunately the boom holding the logs at Anoka broke, and all the timber cut that season went down the river.



## **OJIBWAYS DRIVE SIOUX OUT OF COUNTY**

FORTUNATELY FOR THE white settlers in the Princeton area in Mille Lacs county, the Sioux who once resided on the shores of Mille Lacs lake were driven out by the Ojibways. The Ojibways, or Chippewas, were much more friendly to the white man and more dependable than the Sioux. The Ojibways had their camps along the shores of Lake Superior and extended down to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. They frequently made trips down to visit the Sioux at Mille Lacs lake.

In the course of the year bad blood developed between the tribes, largely because of the quarrels between suitors for some of the Indian maidens. Three brothers, the sons of an Ojibway warrior, were killed by the Sioux at Mille Lacs lake. "The Ojibway warrior never throws away his tears," and the old man determined to have revenge. He organized the Ojibways and they swept down on the Sioux in their three camps at Mille Lacs lake. They drove the Sioux back to their earthen lodges. The Ojibways then, profiting by the knowledge of gunpowder which they obtained from the French traders around Lake Superior, dropped bundles of twigs with gunpowder in them into the apertures at the top of the mud huts, which had been built for the purpose of giving light within and emitting the smoke from the wigwam fire. The bundles dropping into the fire exploded.

The Sioux thought their enemies were aided by the spirits and gave up the fight in despair. The Sioux villages were evacuated and the members of that tribe never again returned to Mille Lacs lake.

## **John Goulding Recalls Sioux-Chippewa Battle**

John Goulding in recounting his arrival in Princeton said that in 1856 his father, who had helped construct the Territorial road through Princeton to Mille Lacs lake, thought he should remove the family to that pioneer village. They came with a six-ox team. Princeton at that time, with the outlying settlements of Estes Brook, Princeton township and Battle Brook, had a population of perhaps 150 people. Indians in blankets and paint, Goulding stated, were a daily, almost hourly sight. They outnumbered the whites, but gave them no trouble.

“In the summer of '57 two Sioux warriors came in by the way of Little Falls to the falls in Rum river just above the mouth of Bradbury brook, where they shot and scalped “Same Day” brother of Kay-gway-do-say and returned home to the Sioux country south of the Mississippi. Soon after this occurrence one hundred and twenty-five Chippewas came down Rum river on foot armed and painted for war. They stayed with us in Princeton over night and had a war dance where Jay Herdliska’s house now stands, which was witnessed by the entire population then here.”

Another Indian dance which figured prominently in the minds of some of the pioneers in Princeton was held one night in a hall, on the floor of which some of the teen-age boys for a prank had sprinkled red pepper. When the Indians got in the hall and started their dance, the red pepper was stirred up and got into their nostrils and eyes. They came out of the hall coughing and spitting and in general distress. According to the story, the more timid women in the village did not sleep that night because they feared that the Indians might retaliate for the prank by staging a massacre.

The Chippewas were in the habit of stopping on their journey down the river in their canoes whenever they saw a settler’s cabin. They would go up to make an investigation. As a rule, if they were not under the influence of firewater, they were friendly.

The settlers, however, sometimes had reason to be afraid of the Indians. In 1862, the year of the Sioux massacre, the settlers here heard that the Chippewas had decided to go on the warpath and exterminate the whites. The settlers came into Princeton and camped in and about the old log hotel near the big elm tree.

## **Stockade Erected in Village**

A stockade was erected, which stood for years just north of the old Robert Byers house, about the first house north of Memorial bridge.

With so many of the men in the pioneer families serving in the Union forces, there was cause for alarm among these early settlers when the Indians were reported to be contemplating an uprising. Some soldiers were stationed in Princeton for two winters. They were from Company F of the Eighth Minnesota.

The Chippewas, however, never gave the residents in the Princeton area any serious trouble.

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## **FIRST SAWMILL IN PRINCETON BUILT IN 1856**

IN 1856, WILLIAM F. DUNHAM & Associates built the first steam sawmill. It had a capacity of about 6,000 feet in 10 hours. The next mill was built by Samuel Ross in 1858. It was operated by waterpower, with a capacity of 3,000 feet in 10 hours. The third sawmill was built by Benjamin Soule in 1867, and had a capacity of 15,000 feet of lumber and 15,000 shingles in 10 hours. It was operated by a 40-horsepower engine.

### **Log Drive Depended on Water in River**

Timber cut in the winter generally came down the river and its tributaries early in the spring, but occasionally there was a water shortage that greatly hindered the operations of the lumbermen. This was true in 1889. That summer there was hung up at Mille Lacs lake and along Rum river 54,200,000 feet of lumber. J.T.D. Sadley for the Mille Lacs Lumber company had in Mille Lacs lake 5 million feet of lumber. John Goss and Sons had 4 million feet in Mike Drew brook. In Bradbury brook alone, there was a total of 20 million feet. The logs were valued at about eight dollars per thousand, or the value of the timber hung up was about \$433,600.

Most of the logs cut above Princeton went through the village down to the mills at Minneapolis and farther south. Even in the early '90's the log boom at the falls of the Mississippi in Minneapolis was a common sight. The last large logging camp in Mille Lacs county operated on Bradbury brook in 1896, although lumbering on a smaller scale was carried on for years between Mille Lacs lake and Princeton.

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## **SAMUEL ROSS OPENS PRINCETON HOUSE**

EARLY IN 1856, Honorable Samuel Ross completed his log hotel, which was immediately opened to the public. This was known as the Princeton House. About this time Thomas Goulding opened the American House.

The first frame building in the village was the Oxnord store, which was later purchased by H.B. Cowles & Company. The next building was the dwelling house of Dr. V. Fell.

Merchants in the village at this time were H.B. Cowles, B.F. Whitney and John Rines.

The first blacksmith shop was built in 1856 by Samuel Ross and placed in the charge of James Roundtree, the first mechanic in this line in the village.

Following the financial crisis of 1857 and the grasshopper scourge, most of the people in this lumbering town were decidedly poor. White flour was scarce, and venison was the prominent article in the daily diet.

When the Civil war started, Princeton had a population of about 300 and there were less than 100 men able to bear arms, but the village furnished its quota; so no draft for soldiers was ever made on it.

In 1870, Benjamin Soule built a flourmill at the junction of the East branch and West branch of Rum river. It was a water mill with a capacity of 20 barrels per day. That was purchased in 1874 by J.T.D. Sadley, who operated it for a number of years.

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## **STAGECOACH BROUGHT MAIL FOR TEN YEARS**

ON NOVEMBER 11, 1886, the following item appeared in the Union:

“Ten more days and the Princeton & Elk River Stage Co. will be a thing of the past. The stagecoach will have to give way for the iron horse. Under the management of Messrs. Campbell & Libby and Messrs. Houlton & Baker the line was ably conducted and served the people of Princeton faithfully. No matter how stormy the day or how bad the roads, the stage made its regular trips. Only twice in a decade, and that was during an impassable snow blockade, has the stage failed to make connections. When it is withdrawn, the people of Princeton will feel as if they had lost an old and true friend. But this is an age of progress, and all of us welcome the change from the stagecoach to the palace car.”

It is difficult for the people of today to realize how a village of approximately 750 inhabitants could have managed to exist with a fair degree of comfort with no connections to the outside world except by stagecoach or some horse-drawn vehicle, but that was the situation of Princeton in the fall of 1886.

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## **PIONEER RESIDENTS HAD STAMINA**

EVEN A CASUAL perusal of the early history of Princeton would convince anyone that the pioneer residents in this community were men and women of ability, stamina and courage. Weaklings apparently had no desire to brave the hardships involved in establishing a home in a new country.

Samuel Milton Byers was one of the early residents of the village. He came to Princeton from New York state in 1857. He was the first clerk of court in Mille Lacs county. He taught the second term of school in the village, and for 17 years devoted a considerable portion of his time to the teaching profession. He then engaged in the mercantile business.

Mr. Byers erected a residence, a portion of which is still standing in the home, which has been remodeled, north of the Memorial bridge and which was for years a family residence. In this building he opened a store in 1874. Later his store was moved to the corner occupied now by the Lund hatchery. There

Mr. Byers continued in the mercantile business until 1888, when he sold the store to his son, Robert.

Robert Byers conducted the store from 1888 to 1912. Like many other merchants of that day, he dealt in barter with the farmers. They would bring in their butter and eggs, and in return receive dry goods and groceries. He had a reputation of being scrupulously honest.

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## **CO-OPERATIVE CREAMERY STARTED IN 1908**

IN 1908 THERE WAS a decided movement in the Princeton area for a Farmers' Co-operative creamery. The businessmen in the village, seeing the ultimate benefit from such an institution, worked hard for it. S.S. Petterson, of the First National bank, was one of the men who spent weeks driving around with a horse and buggy inducing the farmers to come into the co-operative creamery project.

The Union in its issue of March 26, 1908, stated:

“Co-operative creameries when rightly managed have been a success everywhere. The farmers derive all the profits themselves and there are no middlemen. Every farmer in this vicinity should attend the meeting on April 4.”

At a meeting on April 29 the directors of the creamery voted to purchase the site of the old Commercial hotel building, which is where the Independent Oil station now stands. Plans had been adopted for a brick structure, 30 x 40 feet, and an engine room 20 x 20 feet. On May 28 the Princeton Co-operative creamery was incorporated at \$7,500. The creamery first opened for business on June 30, 1908. In 1910, 206,124 pounds of butter were made at the creamery, and the amount paid for butterfat to the farmers was \$49,149.

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## **C.H. CHADBOURNE PIONEER DAIRYMAN**

C.H. CHABOURNE CAME to Princeton in 1856. He purchased a large farm consisting of 900 acres just south of the village. The large, square brick dwelling house erected on that farm is still a landmark in this area. It is just south of the Mille Lacs county line on the old Elk River-Princeton road. Folsom in his “Fifty Years in the Northwest” published in 1888, states that the Chadbourne farm consists of 900 acres under cultivation, 500 of which is devoted to tame grass and pasturage, on which Mr. Chadbourne feeds 150 head of blooded stock. He has a large dairy, which nets him \$1,200 annually.

Mr. Chadbourne was chosen as the manager of the first creamery to be erected in Princeton. It was a small frame structure, just east of the railroad tracks on Fourth Street South, opposite the Memorial park. Farmers in Mille

Lacs, Sherburne and Isanti counties owned four-fifths of the stock in the creamery, but it was not a co-operative organization.

Mr. Chadbourne was an expert buttermaker, and the butter from the creamery sold at a premium – 14 cents per pound in five-pound packages and 16 cents for single pounds. At the first churning on May 27, 1890, 175 pounds of butter were made. By the middle of June the churnings had shot up to from 800 to 1,000 pounds per day, and the butter was of such high quality that it was finding a ready market in the cities on the east coast. The creamery later developed into a skimming station. The cream was then shipped to Bridgeman and Russell at Duluth, where it was manufactured into butter. In 1900, 10,000 pounds of milk were being received daily at the Bridgeman-Russell station.

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## **PRINCETON'S FIRST HOSPITAL OPENED IN 1900**

PRINCETON'S FIRST HOSPITAL was opened by Dr. Henry C. Cooney in the home of Mrs. Mary Ecklund in 1900. Dr. Cooney had come to Princeton in 1888. After practicing here for ten years, he returned to Chicago for his postgraduate course. Two years later when he returned to Princeton he opened the hospital. At first it had only five or six beds and one nurse.

Mrs. Cooney, who was with Dr. Cooney in Chicago while he was taking his postgraduate course in surgery, at that time took training as a surgical nurse. For two and a half years after the hospital was first opened, she served as the surgical nurse, assisting Dr. Cooney in every operation.

After the hospital had been opened for about six months, it was enlarged to have a capacity of 10 or 12 beds, and was reorganized under the name of the Northwestern hospital.

In 1909, Dr. Cooney purchased the Ed. Anderson home, which was remodeled to form a suitable hospital, and occupied the lot where the C.C. Mitchell residence now stands. Later a wing was added to this building, greatly increasing the space, until in 1937 it had a capacity of 35 beds and in connection with it a modern nurses' home.

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## **NEWSPAPERS**

The first newspaper was The Princeton Appeal. It was published by William M. Quigley, and the first issue appeared in December 1873. In May, 1875, J.S. Brocklehurst purchased the paper and continued it until the following spring.

Robert C. Dunn commenced the publication of The Princeton Union in December 1876, and it has been published continuously since then.

Another weekly newspaper, The Princeton News, was founded in 1901. It was first published by M.L. Cormany, an attorney and photographer. The News



was later taken over by Dr. T.L. Armitage. In 1917 it was purchased by The Princeton Union.

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## **PRINCETON SPORTS-MINDED**

PRINCETON IS A fairly lively town for a village of its size. Both men and women are sports-minded. They enjoy hunting and fishing. There are a number of golf enthusiasts, and an active aviation club.

The airport owned by the village is on its western border on Highway 95. The runway is 2,650 feet long and 300 feet wide. There is an administration building and three hangars. The airfield is lighted from dusk to dawn every day in the year, so that planes may land here at any time of the day or night.

The golf course is in the southeastern section of the village along Rum river. It is beautifully laid out and well maintained. There are nine holes. Alex Kapsner is president of the Golf club, and there are 150 members. Playing was first begun on the course in the fall of 1954.

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## **ROBERT C. DUNN ACTIVE IN STATE POLITICS**

RESIDENTS OF PRINCETON have always taken a keen interest in civic and political affairs, and the village generally is predominantly Republican. Robert C. Dunn, who came to Princeton in 1876, and that same year established the Union, probably took a lively interest in state politics because it was a field in which the editors of the rural newspapers in the '80's and '90's were particularly active. Being Irish by birth, he also had a natural flair for politics. When a relatively young man, Mr. Dunn served as town clerk of Princeton, which then comprised the territory of the village and Princeton township.

Mr. Dunn had acquired a considerable knowledge of law, although he did not pose as an attorney nor had he ever attempted to be admitted to the bar. It was a matter of self-education. He was elected county attorney in 1884, and was re-elected in 1886. At that time it was not required that a county attorney be a member of the bar.

Mr. Dunn served two terms in the state house of representatives, in the 1889 and 1903 legislatures. In his second term he sparked the state pine land investigation. The committee found that there had been woeful negligence in the office of the state auditor in handling the sale of stumpage.

It was largely his activity along this line that brought Mr. Dunn the nomination for state auditor on the Republican ticket in 1894. Princeton and Mille Lacs county gave him strong support. Of the 1,477 votes cast in the county in the election, Mr. Dunn received 1,023 and the nominees of the other three parties, a total of 161. He was re-elected in 1898.

## **Became Good Roads Advocate**

In 1910 Mr. Dunn filed as a candidate for the house of representatives for the explicit purpose of putting on the statutes certain road legislation in which he was interested. He introduced the bill providing for a constitutional amendment that would levy a general property tax of one mill for roads and bridges. Mr. Dunn returned to the legislature in 1912 to continue his campaign for adequate state highway legislation, and in 1914 was elected to the state senate. He was the author of the road law which established the State Highway department on the efficient basis on which it has operated for the past 42 years.

Mr. Dunn's work for the road program won him the title of "The Father of Good Roads", and in 1931 the State Highway department dedicated to him the new bridge erected in this village over the West branch of Rum river. That same year the paved highway from Elk River to Princeton was completed. The following year the pavement was carried to Milaca, and in 1933 to Onamia. From Onamia to the head of Mille Lacs lake the road was tarvia-surfaced.

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## **BENJAMIN F. WHITNEY**

BENJAMIN F. WHITNEY CAME to this village from Illinois when only a boy 20 years of age, the year Princeton was organized, in the spring of 1856. In his native state of New York Ben Whitney had learned the carpenter trade. For two years he conducted the log tavern erected by Banjo Bill under the old elm tree on the east branch of Rum river and which was then owned by Samuel Ross. The hotel business was not to Mr. Whitney's liking, and in the summer of 1858 he took a claim near Silver lake. In 1862, Mr. Whitney moved to Hastings, where some of his relatives resided and shortly afterwards enlisted in the Second Minnesota Cavalry, in which he served until the close of the Civil war. He then returned to Princeton and engaged in the mercantile business in a store which was erected on the corner where the Princeton State ban now stands. This store was built of lumber hauled from Ben Soule's mill on the east branch of Rum river. For five years Mr. Whitney conducted his general store and then went to California, where he remained for three years. He helped lay the first telegraph line on the Pacific coast.

In 1872 he returned to Princeton and conducted a wagon shop and feed mill here for 35 years. In 1893 he moved to a farm in Baldwin township.

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## **SWAN OLSON FIRST CAR DEALER IN PRINCETON**

SWAN OLSON CAME to Minnesota in the fall of 1893. He first worked as a sawyer in the lumber camp of the Page brothers at Page. He came down the river in the spring, assisting with the drive. He then found employment at the

brickyards. For four years he worked at the brickyards in the summer and went into the woods in the winter, returning to Princeton in the spring.

Mr. Olson, who was a native of Sweden, was accustomed to seeing hard liquor sold and consumed in moderation. He was a strictly temperate man himself. He was employed in the Gunderson saloon for some time, which was in a building which stood where the Scheffel Furniture is now located. In 1897 Mr. Olson and another native of Sweden, Magnus Sjoblom, purchased what is known as the Briere building from Elmer Chapman. They conducted a saloon there until 1913. After the village became dry it was converted into a pool hall. Mr. Olson operated the pool hall until 1923, when he sold it to Alvie Bockhoven.

Swan Olson was the proud owner of the third automobile in Princeton village. He was so delighted with the car that he took the agency for it.

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