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LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY

Location

The most obvious irregularity of the western border of the map of Minnesota is a hump of land that extends westward into the State of South Dakota. From an airplane this protruding hump capped by two long lakes looks ~~a little~~ like a large water blister. Beginning in what is approximately its center is a continental divide that runs first east, then northward from the western border of Minnesota to the Lake of the Woods. By this divide all the water on its west slope is forced to flow into Hudson Bay, while the waters that collect on its southeast slope go either to the Gulf of Mexico or the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Of special interest to us in Lac qui Parle County is the large lake on the south slope of the divide, Big Stone Lake, for out of it comes the Minnesota River that as it cuts across the southern half of the State forms the natural northern and southeastern boundaries of the triangle of land that is our county. Lac qui Parle covers 790 square miles and is bounded on the south by Yellow Medicine County and on the west by the South Dakota Line.

The swift and narrow Lac qui Parle River is the largest river within our county. Fed by numerous streams it rushes into the main channel of the Minnesota River about half way down the county's northeastern border, ~~of our county~~. When these two rivers meet, a peculiar thing happens.

The Minnesota, a larger but slower body of water, receives the flow of silt from the swifter Lac qui Parle River. Because the Minnesota isn't swift enough to carry off this additional burden, the mud of the Lac qui Parle

River has been piling up in the stream bed of the Minnesota for centuries. As a result, a river-made mud dam has formed at this point, backing the water of the Minnesota between the high bluffs of the Minnesota Valley, and forming a lake more than 15 miles long and at places over a mile wide.

Origin of Name of Lake and County

This lake is now called Lac qui Parle. Around Lac qui Parle Lake were centered the major activities of the first inhabitants, the Indians, and those of early explorers, traders, missionaries, and settlers.

Lac qui Parle is a French name which means "the lake that talks," and is taken from the Dakota or Sioux Indian name, "Mde Lyedan" (mde, for lake; iye, for speaks; dan, a diminutive suffix).

Most historians explain that the Indians gave this peculiar name to the lake because of the strange sounds or echoes heard when the wind blows across its waters and along its rocky bluffs. The Indian who, moved either by fear or a poetic impulse, first gave the lake its name, will never be known. But surely we should be glad that our fathers appreciated its charm, and named our whole county for the unusual lake which forms its northeastern boundary, Lac qui Parle.

Effect of Glaciers on Land Surface

The surface of Lac qui Parle County is for the most part gently rolling prairie, a county-wide reminder of the three glaciers which swept across this area.

Thousands of years ago, three huge ice sheets, often hundreds of feet thick, came down from the north and northwest and ruthlessly pushed their way across this ~~area~~ land. What the first two glaciers did to the land is not evident, but we can see what happened when the last ~~of these~~ ice sheets finally melted away.

All over this part of our State, the melting ice left huge piles of

rich soil called glacial drift. Glacial drift in our county consists of a mixture of soil picked up by the ice on its journey south from the polar regions. After hundreds of years of freezing weather, the climate got warmer, the ice melted, and whatever was caught in or on it was left behind to make the surface formations as they are today.

On the western border of our county is a narrow belt of low hills, knolls and irregular ridges known as the Antelope Hills. The portion near Mehurin and Augusta Townships on the north side of the west branch of Lac qui Parle River, is called Stony Ridge. The largest of these hills is called Mt. Wickman. To the north this formation is known as Yellow Bank Hills. All these series of ridges and hills are a part of what is known as the Third Moraine of the Continental Ice Sheet, one of twelve such deposit formations found in Minnesota.

These bare stretches of rich land gradually were covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, cut through here and there by streams and rivers along whose banks fringes of forests and tangled underbrush sprang up. This great expanse of grass attracted vast herds of American bison (buffalo), deer, and antelope, while thousands of land birds and water fowl grew fat feeding in the marshes and pools.

Antelope Valley on the west border of our county was so-named because of the numerous antelope herds that lived here before the hunters and settlers forced these graceful deer-like animals to better protected feeding grounds beyond the Missouri River.

First Inhabitants

It seems fair to guess that the first people to live in this area after the glaciers melted away, were Eskimos. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Eskimos, who must have been driven from the north by the southward sweep of the glaciers, followed them back again as they retreat-

ed to the Polar regions. As yet no definite traces to prove this have been discovered. However, there are even today very definite signs that there were people in this county for hundreds of years before the white men came.

Mound Builders

Remains have been found ~~that~~ suggesting the possibility that the ancestors of the present Sioux or Dakota Indians followed a race which ~~that may have~~ lived here soon after the glaciers melted. Strange mounds of dirt attracted the attention of many of the very first explorers who came to this region, and they often mentioned them in the records they kept of their travels and adventures.

Early explorers noted that rising above the rolling country were irregularly shaped piles of dirt, whose outlines and soil were distinctly different from those of the surrounding hills.

Some thought the mounds were remains of Indian fortifications. A few curious men dug into them and to their surprise found bones of Indians and a lot of fire-blackened pieces of pottery. The real meaning of these immense heaps of dirt then came to light. They were burial mounds.

Most of the mounds in this county are around Lac qui Parle Lake and River. Others were found in the northern part ~~of this county~~ near the Yellow Bank River.

It was soon discovered that some ~~of the mounds~~ were better built than others. As a result, it is now thought that these mounds were made by two distinct groups of Indians.

The poorly built mounds are believed to have been made by an early tribe of Sioux-like Indians. Some authorities claim that these mound builders were driven from this territory by ~~a more~~ the powerful, war-like ~~group of Indians, the~~ Algonquins, who came from the eastern states by way of the Great Lakes.

Later these Siouan (Sioux or Dakota) mound builders are supposed to have gotten strong enough to recapture their old hunting grounds (about 500 years later), and it is ~~to~~ this second group that ~~are~~ is thought to have made the better mounds.

Indian Inhabitants Found by First Explorers

The Indians found living in this prairie country by the first white man who arrived, were made up of four tribes of the Sioux or Dakota. These tribes were named Medwakantons, Wahpetons, Sissetons, and Wahpekutes. The two tribes that claimed the hunting and fishing grounds in the area of Lac qui Parle County were the Wahpetons, (those of the Village of Leaves), and the Sissetons, (those of the Village of the Marsh).

These two tribes were divided into upper and lower groups. Those who lived in and around our county were of the upper group. Lac qui Parle Lake was a favorite camping spot for these Indians.

The Sioux have been regarded as among the most highly developed of all North American Indians. Their rules of life were simple and they firmly obeyed the tribal laws. Their God was found in all nature; the elements, the trees, the shrubs, the animals, and the birds. "All were 'Wakon', spiritual mysteries in which God spoke to them." They restored health and life through the simple use of herbs, sweat baths, and lying in the sun.

First Explorers

That white men roamed this region early in the history of the State can safely be guessed, for to the north of our county was the natural water route to Canada, the Red River of the North. Furthermore, as we have seen, the Minnesota River, forming our northeast border, joins the early-explored Mississippi River. Those coming up the Mississippi or traveling on the Red River probably heard about our county from the Indians who must have traveled also on these water routes.

Soon after the Louisiana Purchase, the United States Government sent Lieutenant Zebulon Pike to explore the upper reaches of the Mississippi River. He secured a treaty with the Sioux of that region for a tract of land to be used as a military base for further exploration. The War of 1812 delayed this plan for a while, but soon after the war, Major Stephen M. Long was sent to Minnesota to decide on a site for an army post on the land secured in the Pike Treaty. On the advice of Long, the Government sent Lieut. Col. Henry Leavenworth and a detachment of troops to the mouth of the Minnesota, where they established an army post, later to be called Fort Snelling.

With this foothold in the Minnesota wilderness, the government again sent Major Long with a group of scientists to obtain detailed information about the land, the plants, the bird and the animal life to be found here. Major Long and his group arrived at the fort ~~at the mouth of the Minnesota River,~~ and continued up the Minnesota River on July 9, 1823. They then went on through Lake Traverse and followed the Red River to the 49th degree of north latitude; then turned east to Lake Superior and returned home via the Great lakes. The report handed in by this group of explorers and scientists was the first official information gathered about this part of Minnesota.

Under Foreign Flags

Up to the time of the Louisiana Purchase, it is interesting to note the number of foreign countries which had at some time laid claim to the land that is now our county.

Three hundred and ten years before the United States purchased this part of the continent from France, Spain claimed the entire valley of the Mississippi including what is now Lac qui Parle County.

On March 8, 1682, La Salle arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi River and immediately claimed all the land bordering the river for the king of France. Du Luth had already laid claim to the upper river country by

planting the French king's arms at Mille Lacs and elsewhere. Perrot, another French explorer, at a fort near Wabasha, on May 8, 1689, also declared all the region of the upper river to be French property.

France lost the land east of the river to England in 1763. At that time it was found that France a few months earlier had given the land west of the river to Spain. On October 1, 1800, Spain gave this land back, ~~to France,~~ but France did not take formal possession until November 30, 1803. The delay was caused by the fact that France, torn by war, was afraid to tell the world that she owned this land while she was too busy elsewhere to protect it.

Fortunately for France, the United States offered her a handsome price for these lands. France needed the money to keep on fighting, so after getting a formal receipt of the purchase from the United States, she boldly announced to the world that she owned this territory and then turned it over to our country on December 20, 1803. That is the way our county became a part of the United States.

Early Foreign Explorers

Now that we have learned how we came to be placed securely under the protection of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase, let us retrace our steps to the explorations in our neighborhood before Major Long's arrival on the Minnesota scene.

Of the few early white men who came to this northwest wilderness, records show that Frenchmen were the first to drift down here from their outposts in Canada and about the Great Lakes. Who these individuals were, how far they came, or what were their adventures and their fate we may never know, although it is possible of course that sometime, somewhere, records may come to light that they may have buried when all hope of getting back was lost. It is fair to guess, however, that, since they must have used the

natural water routes, they ~~must have~~ traveled on the Minnesota and thus ~~have~~ passed our county.

Grosseiliers and Radisson seem to have come into Minnesota in 1654-56 and 1659-60. There is no evidence that they reached our part of Minnesota, but at least they were getting "hot."

The first man to concentrate his explorations on our Minnesota River was Le Sueur, who spent the winter of 1700-1701 near what is now Mankato. He is popularily remembered as the explorer who took a couple of tons of blue clay back to France, thinking it was copper-bearing. To us he is important for the reason that on his return to France a carefully drawn map was made from the notes of his trips. While at the fort which he built near the junction of the Blue Earth River and the Minnesota, he sent his men on a big buffalo hunt to the prairies. One day seven naked and hungry men arrived at the fort and said that they were French traders from Canada who had been robbed by the Indians. So with what he heard from his own men, from these traders, and from the Indians who visited him, he was able to tell much more about the region than he had seen himself. The Minnesota River which is on the map called "R. St. Pierre ou Mini-Sota" is quite accurately located ~~on the map~~ and is shown flowing from lake "des Tintons", which might have been intended either for Lac qui Parle or Big Stone.

For sixty-six years no one bothered about our part of the State. Then came a Connecticut Yankee, Jonathan Carver. He ascended the Minnesota River in 1766 and, as this was before the Revolution, he was under the command of British officials. He probably came no farther than what is now New Ulm. Yet from the information given him by the Indians, Carver decided that the St. Pierre (Minnesota) River came from a number of large lakes. His reports also mention a river which flowed north into Hudson Bay. This we know today to be quite true, so for this careful deduction, Carver deserves to enter our little hall of fame for people who helped to open our country.

Selkirk Visitors

Up on the Canadian border where the Red River leaves Minnesota on its journey to Lake Winnipeg was a colony of Swiss, Scots, and others who had established a settlement near what is now Pembina, North Dakota. This group of settlers had a difficult time keeping alive. Persuaded to come there by Thomas Douglas, the Earl of Selkirk of Scotland, these "Selkirk" pioneers first had difficulties with the fur trappers and traders of the Northwest Company. No sooner had this trouble been adjusted, than a series of poor crops due to insects, birds, grasshoppers, rats, and drouth, nearly ruined them. Faced with a year of starvation unless they got more seed for planting, these settlers sent a delegation to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi. They traded by way of the Red River to Lake Traverse, Big Stone Lake, and the Minnesota River to Fort Snelling, and then down the Mississippi River to the post that was their goal. They left in the early winter of 1820, and it took them weeks to make their journey. When they started back early the following spring, they carried with them some 300 bushels of wheat, oats, and peas.

This cargo was brought back in barge-like boats called mackinaw boats. They were usually flat-bottomed, from 20 to 50 feet long, and 4 to 10 feet wide. Some of them could carry from five to eight tons. They were propelled by a crew of five to nine men who sometimes used oars, sometimes long poles. One of the crew acted as a steersman; the others, when they were not rowing, walked ~~along a~~ on plank[s] that extended along ~~the entire~~ both sides of the boat and pushed it ahead with long poles. They made from five to fifteen miles per day, depending on the depth of the water and whether or not rapids were encountered. Where the water was too shallow either to push or row, the boats were moved forward on logs used as rollers. Sometimes if the wind were in the right direction sails were used. Often if the banks were steep and the

water deep, the men pulled their boat along by seizing willow bushes that overhung the water's edge.

Five Swiss families who had intended to join the Selkirk settlement, located near Fort Snelling in 1821. In the next few years several hundred ~~of the~~ colonists, discouraged by cold and floods, deserted the Pembina settlement. Some made their homes near Fort Snelling, while others went further down the Mississippi. Had Lac qui Parle County been opened to here settlement then there is no doubt that many of them would have stopped ~~in our county~~ as they migrated down the Minnesota River.

Later Government Explorers

By 1835 our National Government felt that it should know more about its possessions in southwestern Minnesota, so G. W. Featherstonhaugh, a geologist, and William Williams Mather, both Englishman, were sent to explore this region. They proceeded up the Minnesota River and spent considerable time exploring the land formations around Big Stone and Traverse Lakes and the Coteau des Prairies, a high rise of land south and west of here. As a result of this trip Featherstonhaugh wrote two books. In one of these, called "A Canoe Voyage Up The Minnay Sotor," he mentions a visit with Joseph Renville whom he pictures ruling like a king among his Indian subjects. But most men who write about their visits with Renville have written only in the highest praise of his simple and generous hospitality. We will have more of Renville later.

The first accurate map of our part of the State was issued in 1843. It was the result of a geographical survey made by Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, a Frenchman, commissioned by the United States Government. With Nicollet were John C. Fremont, who later ran for the presidency of the United States, and four other men. Nicollet's records show that he visited Big Stone Lake and other places in and near our county before he returned to civilization.

On his return trip he, too, visited Renville's home at Lac qui Parle.

The Early Furtraders

Of the many furtraders who have roamed in and near our county, we find only brief notice. It would seem that these men were more interested in trapping than in writing about their thrilling experiences.

Records show that one of the earliest traders to carry on his work in our region was a Scotchman by the name of Cameron. He trapped here at the close of the 18th century.

Another trader was Charles Patterson, who had a trading post near here as early as 1783. In 1803, a Canadian, named Charles Le Page, journeyed through this region on a return trip from the Yellowstone country to our west. He traveled down the Minnesota River on May 15th of that year with a band of Yankton and Sisseton Indians on a visit to Mendota.

The first trader to stay here for any length of time was James H. Lockwood. He came up the Minnesota River as far as Lac qui Parle in 1816 and ran a trading post here for two years.

Joseph Renville

One of the most interesting men, and one who had much to do with the destinies of the Indians and the early history of Lac qui Parle County, was Joseph Renville. Although Renville never lived here, his fur-trading post across Lac qui Parle Lake in what is now Chippewa County for years played a leading part in the lives of the Indians, traders, and early missionaries who lived in and near our county.

Joseph Renville's father was a French trader, his mother a Dakota Indian of Little Crow's Kaposia band. The Kaposia Indians were at various times located at points between the mouths of the Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers, frequently stopping at what is now the site of South St. Paul in east-

ern Minnesota.

Renville was born in 1779 during the Revolutionary War. Because of the fur-trading activities of his father among the Sioux, the boy's only companions were Indians. As a result, he grew up almost as one of them until he was ten years old, when his father took him to Canada, and engaged a Catholic priest to teach him the French language and Christianity. However, this education soon came to an end.

The elder Renville died and Joseph was then forced to shift for himself. He worked as a trapper and hunter (coureur de bois) for a British fur company, and married a Sioux girl. During the years he was collecting furs, he became acquainted with the trails from Canada southward to the Missouri River.

It was Joseph Renville who guided Lieutenant Pike in his exploration of Minnesota. Later we find him fighting for the British in the War of 1812. As a captain in the British army, he led a band of Kaposia and other Dakota Indians against the Americans.

After the war, Renville returned to Canada and joined the Hudson's Bay Company as a fur trader, but left this company to organize the Columbia Fur Company in 1822. In his travels he became acquainted with the officials of the new army post, now Fort Snelling, and his fame as a guide and interpreter (he knew French, English, and Sioux) caused Major Stephen H. Long to hire him in that capacity when he explored the Minnesota River in 1823.

Meanwhile the American Fur Company of John Jacob Astor had purchased the Columbia Fur Company and among the employees they retained was Joseph Renville. He was sent to Lac qui Parle Lake where he built a fur-trading post on the northeast shore of the lake.

Friend of both Indian and white man, his fame as a "square-shooter" soon spread throughout this territory. It is said that he never refused help

to any man, regardless of race. All who came anywhere near the Renville trading post, made it a point to stop over to enjoy his hospitality.

A devout Christian, Renville was of the greatest help to the Reverend J. S. Williamson who arrived at Lac qui Parle in 1835 to establish a mission for the Indians. He helped build the mission dwellings and worked with the missionaries in their translation of the Scriptures into the Sioux or Dakota language.

Although he had married his wife, by Indian ritual, he took her hundreds of miles down to Prairie du Chien so that his marriage could be solemnized by a Catholic priest.

Renville's efforts to bring Christianity to the Indians were rewarded by his being made a ruling elder in the church at Lac qui Parle. He held this position and continued his furtrading until his death in 1846 at the age of 67.

It is often said that had Joseph Renville been alive in 1862 at the time of the outbreak of the Indian Massacres, his understanding of the problems of both Indians and white men might have prevented this terrible calamity.

Lac qui Parle under Territorial and State Control

It might be thought that after the United States bought the great tract of land known as the Louisiana Purchase, a uniform system of government would result. But such was not the case.

Until 1849 our frontier wilderness had no civil courts or peace officers. The only laws enforced were those of the Indians, the various trading agreements of the fur companies, and the restrictions of the military officials at Fort Snelling. Even had there been licensed peace officers, the chances are that by the time they had rounded up all the Indians and the few whites in this region, they would have discovered that the area had been

transferred to another political unit, for the boundaries of the county were shunted about in the most confusing fashion.

On March 26, 1804 our county was included in the Louisiana District of Indiana Territory. Here it remained until March 3, 1805 when it became a part of the Louisiana Territory. When Louisiana became a state in 1812, Lac qui Parle County was left in what remained of the Louisiana Territory, whose name was then changed to Missouri Territory.

In 1821 Missouri became a State and together with the rest of the vast area west of the upper Mississippi River, our county was left outside of any state or territory. But on June 28, 1834, this area passed from the general control of Congress and became a part of Michigan Territory. Two years later, on April 20, 1836, the Wisconsin Territory took it over. On June 12, 1838 it became a part of the Territory of Iowa.

When, on December 28, 1846, the State of Iowa was admitted to the Union, Lac qui Parle was again left without territorial or state allegiance.

Agitation for Statehood

The credit for the organization of Minnesota, first as a territory and then as a state, must be given to a few public spirited people living on the eastern border of what is now Minnesota. If you examine a map of the State, you will see that directly opposite the center where our western boundary has a hump, the eastern border dips in. This is a triangular section formed by the St. Croix River on the east, and the Mississippi on the west. A peculiar thing happened to this part of the State. Originally belonging to the western part of St. Croix County of the Territory of Wisconsin, this triangle of land had established a good local government, but it lost its organized standing when Wisconsin was admitted to the Union as a State in May 1848, with the St. Croix as the western border.

What a quandary to leave these people in! Imagine what would happen

if all at once we were told that our county officers had no legal right to keep law and order. As nearly as these people could find out they were still under the jurisdiction of the old Territory of Wisconsin. So they decided to elect a territorial delegate to represent them in Washington.

The election was held October 30, 1848, and in a close contest Henry Hastings Sibley won over Henry M. Rice. The strange thing about this election was that Sibley did not belong to any state or territory. He was living at Mendota, now Mendota is west of the upper Mississippi and that part of the county at this time belonged to Congress. So you see in reality Sibley was without any state or territorial affiliation. However, after long discussion he was given a seat in the governing body on January 15, 1849.

Sibley's trouble in convincing Congress that he was a legal member proved to be only a foretaste of the battle he had to face to push through a law creating Minnesota as a territory. Yet, helped by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, he managed in the end to break down opposition and get the necessary law passed. Minnesota became a Territory on the last day of session, March 3, 1849.

During the next few years the Minnesota Territory grew very rapidly and soon these pioneers were ready to fight for Statehood rights.

This attempt met many objections from congressmen of the Southern States, for opinion was divided on the question of slavery, and at every session of Congress there was a hard fight between the northern congressmen, who wanted more states admitted to the Union who would vote against slavery, and the southern congressmen who wanted to admit States who would vote for it. Only after a bitter struggle, did the friends of Minnesota finally get the necessary votes to admit Minnesota as a State. This was on May 11, 1858.

People Prominent in Pioneer Development

No history of any county would be complete without reference to the

men who were influential in its development.

One such man was Joseph Renshaw Brown who laid out the first wagon trail from Fort Snelling to Lac qui Parle. Brown was a run-a-way printer's helper who came to Fort Snelling in 1819 as a drummer boy for the Fifth Infantry. After he served his term in the army, he entered the Indian trade and became one of the important men in the development of Minnesota.

Henry Hastings Sibley did much for the fur trade in and about Lac qui Parle County, and encouraged the men at his posts to do anything they could to help the arriving missionaries. One of his greatest contributions was his share in the making of the Indian treaties of 1851, whereby the Sioux ceded their lands to the United States Government, and ~~made~~ which white settlement possible.

Control of Fur Trade by Fort Snelling Officials

During the early years the only official influence in the State was the army at Fort Snelling. As soon as they were settled at the fort, the army officials and government men began a check of the traders. No fur trader was allowed to operate without a U. S. license, which was issued by the agent at the fort. In this way the government cooperated with the American Fur Company in forcing British traders to leave the fur business to Americans.

Usually the agent warned the trader that he must either leave or become an American citizen. If this warning was ignored, the trader was arrested, his goods taken away, and any liquor he had was destroyed. For the traders had learned that it was very easy to get furs from Indians who were drunk.

By 1826 the agents at Fort Snelling had the fur-trading business pretty well in hand. The men then licensed to trade in our part of the State were Joseph Renville at Lac qui Parle, John Campbell at the mouth of the Chippewa River near what is now Montevideo, and William Dickson and

Hazen P. Mooers at Lake Traverse.

Records show that Mooers was unusually successful. On one trip alone from Lake Traverse down the Minnesota River to Fort Snelling in the summer of 1829 he carried 126 packs of fur valued at $12,000.

Arrival of Missionaries in Minnesota

The first missions established in Lac qui Parle County were those of the Protestant religion. This mission work was supported by the American Board of Home Missions, an organization financed by Protestant churches in the eastern States.

The coming of the missionaries to eastern Minnesota and later to our county dates from the establishment of fur-trading headquarters at Mackinaw Island at the strait between Lakes Michigan and Huron. Here the American Fur Company had a base of supplies for their traders who were scattered throughout the forest country, and from here the American Board sent out scouts to investigate the possibilities of new mission posts in the western wilderness.

The Rev. erend Jedediah D. Stevens and his wife arrived at the island in 1827. Two years later Stevens and the Rev. erend Alvan Coe were sent into the wildernesses of Wisconsin, and Minnesota. They were to find places for establishing new Indian missions. On September 1, 1829 we find them at Fort Snelling where they were warmly welcomed as the guests of the Indian agent, Major Taliaferro, whose name was pronounced "Tulliver."

The arrival of these first scouts from the mission at Mackinaw was an important event at Fort Snelling. For years Taliaferro had been trying to educate the Indian tribes in the vicinity. One of his experiments was an Indian farm which was called "Eatonville," located near what is now Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. Major Taliaferro realized the missionaries could be of great help to him and he offered to give them the use of his Indian farm.

Encouraged by this report, the American Board in 1834 sent Dr. William-

up the Mississippi. He was instructed also to report on the possibility of working among the Indians of Iowa.

In the meantime two strong young men had arrived at Fort Snelling. These two men were brothers. Today our historians commonly refer to them as the "Pond Brothers." When they landed at Fort Snelling from the steamer "Warrior," on May 6, 1834, the older, Samuel, was twenty-six years of age, Gideon was twenty-three. They had come west to teach the Indians Christianity, and yet, strangely enough, neither of them had been trained as a clergyman.

Both boys began life in a small Connecticut town where they were given a fair education, and had spent a good part of their early years on farms and at various trades. One day they attended a religious revival like those we occasionally see today, when a group of preachers come into town and pitch a tent to hold their prayer meetings. This particular meeting did something to these boys, for at the end of the revival, both decided they would spend their lives helping to convert others.

Samuel had earned a little money, and, against the advice of his friends, he headed west to start his work. While at Galena, Illinois, he cornered a liquor salesman and tried to convince him that he ought to change to a less evil trade. During this friendly chat Samuel heard of the poor heathen Indians up in Minnesota. Helping them appealed to his adventurous spirit, and immediately he wrote for his brother Gideon to join him, and the two set out for Fort Snelling.

At the time of their arrival Major Taliaferro was visiting in the East. Before long Major Bliss, the commandant at the fort, heard their plans and immediately sent Samuel, the older, to help teach Chief Big Thunder of the Kaposia Indians, to plow.

Chief Big Thunder had been given a team of oxen and a plow by Major Taliaferro, but until this time he hadn't used it. What a sight it must

have been to see Samuel driving the oxen and the dignified Chief taking turns with another Indian at holding the plow! It is claimed that Chief Big Thunder and his head soldier, Big Iron, were the first Dakotas who ever plowed a field. While teaching them to farm, Samuel had to sleep in the house of the chief and share his not too clean sleeping quarters with the chief's two wives and a house full of children and dogs.

Meanwhile Major Taliaferro returned to Fort Snelling. Finding the younger brother, Gideon, such a willing helper, he immediately sent him to teach another chief at the "Eatonville" farm on Lake Calhoun. This Indian's name was Chief Cloudman. He was considered one of the most intelligent Indians around the fort. A near-fatal incident in his life had made of him a hard-working Indian farmer.

About four years before the Pond Brothers had arrived at the Fort, Chief Cloudman and some of his tribe were up in the Red River country (perhaps in our county) hunting buffalo. A sudden blizzard trapped them, and for several days he and his men were cut off by heavy snow before they managed to crawl back to their camps more dead than alive. When Major Taliaferro heard of this incident, he suggested that the chief and his people give up the uncertain life of hunting and fishing and adopt the white man's surer method of raising food. The chief was intelligent enough to see the agent's point and began farming.

But they had to work their fields with hand tools, and when Taliaferro sent Gideon Pond to show them how to use a plow, there was rejoicing on all sides.

While the Pond brothers were busy in the fields of the Indians, the American Board of Home Missions had considered the favorable reports of their mission scouts and decided that it was time to send their trained teachers into the wilderness. The result was that two trained missionaries

arrived at Fort Snelling in May of 1835. The two were Reverend Thomas Smith Williamson, M. D., and the Reverend Jedediah D. Stevens, both of whom had previously scouted in this area.

When Williamson first came to Fort Snelling, we referred to him as Dr. Williamson. Now we refer to him as the Reverend Thomas Williamson. A brief review of his life will explain why.

Williamson was born in South Carolina in March 1800. Although his father was a minister, Thomas had no desire to follow in his ~~dad's~~ footsteps. He graduated from Jefferson College in Pennsylvania at the age of twenty, then completed a course in medicine at Yale College in 1824. A little later he sold his property, freed what slaves he had, and moved north to Ripley, Ohio. Here he met and married Margaret Poage, a daughter of an army officer. For ten years he practiced medicine, but in the spring of 1833 he began studying for the ministry.

Just why he decided to drop medicine to become a clergyman, no one seems to know, but he offered his services to the American Board, and they sent him on the scouting trip we have already mentioned. After this trip, Williamson returned to Ohio and on September 18, 1834, became an ordained Presbyterian minister. On April 1, 1835, he and his wife and child, accompanied by Alexander G. Huggins and his family and Mrs. Williamson's sister, were sent to Fort Snelling. They arrived at the fort on May 16, 1835.

Fourteen days later the Rev. erend Jedediah D. Stevens arrived with his wife and his niece, a school teacher. Visitors were rare at the Fort, and both parties received a warm welcome.

The Reverend Williamson lost no time in getting his religious work under way. Through the cooperation of Major Loomis, the commandant at the fort, twenty-two members of the garrison formed the First Presbyterian

Church of St. Peter's. This was the first organized church in Minnesota.

With the arrival of these trained missionaries, the Pond Brothers decided to move nearer the Indians. Major Taliaferro suggested that they locate near Chief Cloudman's village on Lake Calhoun. This pleased the chief and he personally picked out a place for them to build their cabin, on a hill overlooking the lake.

A peculiar relationship existed between the Ponds and the newly arrived missionaries. Here were four men all of whom wanted to teach Christianity to the Indians, only two of them trained for the work. Because the other two lacked such training their relations with the properly ordained missionaries were not always sympathetic.

lc The Pond Brothers may have felt slighted when their work was not fully appreciated, but they buried their pride and helped wherever they could. Gideon was an expert carpenter and he and Stevens erected mission buildings on the western shore of a Minneapolis lake now known as Harriet, about a mile south of Lake Calhoun. One of the buildings was used as a mission boarding school for Indian girls, which was taught by Miss Lucy C. Stevens.

Meanwhile the Reverend Williamson was looking for a place to set up his mission. He had considered Lake Calhoun, but this irritated the Pond Brothers who had first claim to the land. Fortunately this ticklish situation was relieved by the arrival of our old friend, Joseph Renville, from Lac qui Parle.

Renville arrived at Fort Snelling on June 3, 1835, to sell his furs and buy his supplies for the coming year. There had been trouble between the Sioux around Lac qui Parle and Chief Hole-in-the-Day's Chippewa to the north. The Chippewa chief knew that Renville would be coming down to the fort at this time, and arrived a few days earlier to complain about him and

his men to Indian Agent Taliaferro.

The day after Renville came, a Council was held between these three to settle the trouble. To the charges of Chief Hole-in-the-Day, Renville replied that his people were justified in killing the Chippewa who were causing them trouble. Renville wanted peace for he knew that war hurt his fur trade. After hearing both sides, Taliaferro gave both men a sound scolding and then proposed a plan of his own.

There was no Indian agent at Lac qui Parle, and Taliaferro decided that the presence of a group of white men there would keep peace. Renville thought it a good idea.

Taliaferro then selected the Reverend Thomas Williamson to go to Lac qui Parle. On June 23, 1835, Williamson and his group ~~were loaded~~ set out, together with the supplies, ~~into~~ in Renville's boats and left Fort Snelling for the wilderness post.

In the eight days it took to reach Traverse des Sioux, almost every known means of navigation was used by the group to get their boats up the Minnesota. From the Traverse, the party changed to wagons and traveled overland. They reached Lac qui Parle seventeen days after leaving the Fort. Williamson chose the north shore of Lac qui Parle Lake as the site for his mission.

Missionaries and the Indian Language

The Indians had no written language. If the missionaries were to accomplish very much, they had the choice of two plans. They could either teach the Indians to understand and read English, or they could invent a Sioux alphabet, translate the Bible and other books into Sioux, and then teach the Indians to read in their own language. The Protestant missionaries of Minnesota chose the latter method.

Whether this choice was the wiser is still debated today. Some claim that the Indians might have made more progress if they had been taught

English, while others insist that every effort should have been made to preserve the Indians' language and customs.

lc The Pond Brothers have the credit for the first definite work done in developing the written language of the Sioux. During their first year in what is now Minnesota, the Ponds built up their vocabulary of Indian words by writing down every new expression they heard. In this they were helped by Scott Campbell, the Fort interpreter, and Lieut. E. A. Ogden, and other officers gladly turned over to them the lists of words they had already gathered.

In creating a Sioux alphabet they found that several of the consonants were different from ours and so our alphabet had no letters for these sounds. To overcome this difficulty, the Ponds used some of the letters of the English alphabet not needed in the Dakota language, and gave them the sound of the strange Indian consonants. The result was an alphabet that could be printed with English letters, but which was very confusing if one did not know which letters had been given new sounds.

The Ponds were soon forced to move in with Stevens at Lake Harriet, and this further discouraged them. Not only did they have to do all of the manual work at this mission, but they had to give up their only cow which they had bought with their hard-earned money.

Revolt of the Ponds

Gideon Pond was the first to object to this treatment. One day he packed up and left the Harriet mission to join Williamson at Lac qui Parle.

With the departure of Gideon, the hard work around the mission was all left to Samuel. He made the best of it for a while, but the fact that Stevens was getting ready to publish, under his own name, a Sioux spelling book that Samuel and Gideon had worked at so hard all winter long, finally

caused Samuel to leave. He returned to his home, became an ordained minister, and was sent back to Minnesota to replace Stevens at Lake Harriet. Stevens at this time was transferred to a post at what is now Winona, Minnesota.

We can now leave Samuel at the Lake Harriet mission with the satisfaction of knowing that at least one of the brothers had realized his ambition of being authorized to teach religion. We shall see what his brother Gideon was doing at Lac qui Parle mission and what had happened to the Williamson group before Gideon arrived.

Williamson Works on Dakota Bible

When the Reverend Williamson and his companions arrived at Lac qui Parle, they, like the other Minnesota missionaries, at once felt the need of rendering the Bible into the language spoken by the Dakotas. They made slow progress, for they had little acquaintance with that language themselves. So, needless to say, Gideon was more than welcome.

He helped build the mission house while translating the Bible. Gideon, Williamson and Renville, all ~~three~~ used ~~all of~~ their spare time working on the translations. They met time after time around a bright fireplace in one of Renville's houses. Here Williamson read the scriptures from Renville's French Bible. Renville rapidly translated the French into Sioux while Gideon wrote down the Sioux words.

First Farmers of Lac qui Parle County

Not all of the work at the Lac qui Parle mission was religious teaching. Alexander G. Huggins and his family had come with the sole purpose of farming. They were the first farmers in our county. They had settled on the south shore of Lac qui Parle Lake, across from the mission. Here Huggins had built a house which was to serve also as a storehouse, a blacksmith shop, a grist mill, and a school for Sarah Poage's classes.

An old letter from one of this early group tells how the seed was

secured for the first wheat grown on this farm in our county. It seems that one day while Huggins was hunting, he happened to kill a wild swan. When his wife cleaned the bird, she discovered that its crop was full of wheat. She cleaned and dried the grain, and later Huggins planted it. To their delight the wheat grew and yielded a good patch of grain. Some people believe that the wheat found in the swan must have come all the way from the fields of the Pembina settlers whom we have mentioned before. This seems reasonable, for our county is in the direct path of the southward flight of migratory birds passing from the Red River Valley to their nesting grounds in the south.

First Industries

A stray herd of sheep brought the first manufacturing to our county. Records state that a carpenter and a group of men had arrived in what is now Lac qui Parle County with a large herd of sheep which they hoped to raise here. When they saw how flat the land was, they decided that so much fencing would be required if they were to keep track of their herd, that they became discouraged, and returned to Fort Snelling, leaving the sheep behind them!

Joseph Renville found the sheep and penned them up. When Huggins arrived to begin farming, he found this fine herd and asked if he could use the wool to make yarn. With Renville's consent Huggins made a couple of hand looms and began to prepare the wool. How many sheep there were is not known, but there must have been quite a few, for the group found it impossible to spin and weave all the wool. Miss Huggins gathered a group of Indian women together and taught them how to spin the yarn and weave it into cloth. Many became so expert that they made their own clothing and blankets.

Huggins also made quite a success of his early flax crops. From flax, linen thread is made, so the Indian women were also taught how to prepare thread from flax to weave it into cloth.

Unfortunately these first industries did not last long, for the flax crops failed. Then one year when buffalo was scarce all the sheep were killed to supply meat for the Indians at the post.

First Weddings

The most outstanding social events at the Lac qui Parle mission were the marriages of Gideon Pond to Miss Sarah Poage, and that of Jonas Pettijohn to Miss Nancy Huggins. You will recall that Miss Sarah Poage came as a teacher with the original Williamson group, and Miss Nancy Huggins was later brought to this mission by the Reverend Williamson on his return from a visit to his Ohio home. About the only trace of the early life of Pettijohn is a vague mention of his helping teach the Indians to farm at the Lake Harriet mission near Fort Snelling. The Reverend Williamson performed both ceremonies. The guests were Joseph Renville and his family, the white folk at the mission and on the Huggins farm, and the curious Indians who lived at this outpost.

Reverend Riggs Arrives

In 1837 another missionary was sent to assist Williamson at Lac qui Parle. He was Reverend Stephen Return Riggs. Riggs had spent about three months at Lake Harriet studying the Dakota language with Samuel Pond. He then went on to Lac qui Parle. It may seem unusual that the American Board should take such an interest in this ~~faraway~~ wilderness station, but they felt that a post, far away from the evil influences of white traders, would offer the best chance for results with the Indians.

Riggs remained at Lac qui Parle for five years and then was transferred to a mission at Traverse des Sioux, about half way between Lac qui Parle and Fort Snelling on the Minnesota River. For some reason Riggs didn't get along very well at his new post. Disappointed, he returned to Lac qui Parle in 1846 to replace Williamson who left to establish a mission post near

what is now South St. Paul.

Mrs. Riggs Introduces Soap to Indians

While Reverend Riggs was busy teaching the Indians ~~about~~ the merits of Christianity, his wife took it upon herself to teach the Indian women that "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." Although the Indians would take occasional baths, they very seldom washed their clothes. Each new costume was worn unchanged as long as it hung together. Their clothes were wet only when they waded across streams or got caught in the rain. This irritated Mrs. Riggs, so she gathered a group around her and determined to show them how to make soap and wash their garments.

The pioneer method of making soap was interesting. The material needed was lye and fat. To make lye, the pioneers saved all of their wood ashes (ashes from hardwood was best), and packed them into a large barrel which had a small hole in the bottom. Then they poured water into the barrel and the drippings which ran out of the small hole at the bottom were caught in a pan. These drippings contained lye. The lye water was placed in a huge kettle and to it was added animal fat and drippings from cooking. If the settlers wanted hard soap, they boiled the mixture until it became very thick; for soft jelly-like soap they boiled it less. The impure particles were skimmed off the top and the rest was poured out to cool. The thick substance was then cut into bars and the housewife had a strong smelling, powerful soap which, accounts say, was as hard on the hands as it was on dirt.

Catholic Missionary at Lac qui Parle

Thus far we have heard only of Protestant missionaries in and near our county. Father Augustin Ravoux, a French Catholic missionary, was sent to investigate this region by the Bishop of St. Louis, Missouri. Ravoux arrived at Lac qui Parle mission in 1841 and remained a couple of months studying missionary methods. Later he was influential in starting St. Anthony

of Padua, the oldest church in what is now Minneapolis.

Riggs With The Dakota Dictionary

Reverend Riggs, like the rest of the Protestant missionaries, worked on a dictionary of the Dakota language. When he returned to Lac qui Parle in 1846, however, he found that the two men on whose help he had counted most, were no longer there. Gideon Pond had left five years before and Joseph Renville had died. Riggs labored on alone, and in 1852 he had the satisfaction of seeing his Indian dictionary published. Thus of all the men who worked in or near our county on an Indian alphabet, Riggs was the only one who completed his work.

An Incident With the Indians

It is recorded that the first Indian at Lac qui Parle who learned to read or write his own language was Wam-dee-O-Kee-ya, or Eagle Help. He was a warrior of distinction and was considered quite a war prophet. At times he was of great assistance to the missionaries in their translating, but he always demanded a good price for his work.

An incident illustrates the general attitude of most of these early Indians. One day Eagle Help organized a war party against the Ojibways to the northeast. Being a war prophet, he told the missionaries, in a boastful manner, that he was going to be victorious. Those at the mission tried to talk him out of going, but he wouldn't listen to them. Reverend Riggs tried to discourage him by saying that he would pray that his war party would be a failure, while Mr. Huggins refused to supply ~~his war party~~ the group with corn for food.

This made Eagle Help and his braves angry, and for revenge they killed and ate two cows owned by the mission. As luck would have it, his war party was a failure; in fact his group didn't even see the enemy. When the Indians returned, they blamed their failure on the white Gods, and, to get even, they killed another cow. Such incidents were common occurrences in those days.

Results of Mission Work

The new teaching first attracted the Indians, but their interest was not deep and rarely lasted. The majority of the Indians would have little to do with the teachers.

There are many reasons that might explain the failure of these missions. Some ~~t~~ told that the job of replacing the Indians' pagan religion with the Christianity of the white man would have been impossible even under the most favorable of conditions.

For one thing, the medicine men of the Indians were always urging the glories of inter-tribal wars, while the missionaries asked for peace. Again, the Indians could not understand the contradiction between the white men's teachings and their actions, especially in trading. These white men, who were supposed to be followers of a just white God, often seemed to them worse than any Indian. Moreover, the Indians could never quite understand the purpose of the missionaries. They could understand why white men came to trade, or were in the army to keep law and order. But these missionaries, who worked in their fields while the Indians played, were beyond their comprehensions. They wondered who supported the missionaries, and suspected them of living on annuities probably stolen from funds that rightly belonged to ~~them~~ the Indians.

Effects of Treaties

These suspicions regarding annuities brings us to the effect of the treaties on the frontier relationship with the Sioux and the white men.

Before the white settlers came, the Minnesota Indians, including those in Lac qui Parle County, lived almost entirely by hunting and fishing. They planted a little corn and gathered some wildrice. Then the white man came wanting new lands for settlement. Soon they began working on a series

of treaties that eventually removed the Indians from most of the southern half of Minnesota. The only land left to them in this section was a ten mile strip on either side of the Minnesota River from the western border to approximately half the distance between the present towns of Redwood Falls and New Ulm.

After each treaty the Indians were given money for the land they sold to the government. But money came in payments called annuities. The Indians had never before had money for luxuries, they usually expected more than they received, and as a result, the young men lost interest in hunting and spent most of their time gambling and playing.

Many of the traders and settlers who rushed into the country, in spite of government regulations, began trading whiskey with the Indians. Lac qui Parle County was too far away to get much of this liquor, but enough was brought up on canoes and then packed across country on horses to cause much of drunkenness.

To get ~~this~~ whiskey the Indians would trade their guns, their blankets, and even their supplies of food and furs. During their drunken sprees, they became wild, fought among themselves and often got so drunk that they rolled into their camp fires and burned themselves, and sometimes even stumbled into rivers and drowned.

Missionaries, Indian agents, level-headed white men and Indians alike, tried their best to stop this disgraceful trade, but conditions went from bad to worse. It was a situation particularly disturbing to the missionaries, and this was but a part of their grief.

The "blanket Indians," as those were called who refused to accept any of the teachings and laws of the white men, took it upon themselves constantly to annoy the missionaries. They bothered and threatened the Indians who attended the mission schools. One of their tricks was to shoot and crack the mission bells; another was to gather around the mission churches and make so much noise

that those inside could not hear the sermons.

At Lac qui Parle, the relationship between the mission workers and the Indians was kept under control by Joseph Renville, but after his death the Indians had things their own way. The first to wilt under this annoyance was Reverend Williamson who left for a more peaceful post at South St. Paul. His successor, Reverend Riggs, took this abuse for a number of years, but eventually decided to move also. His immediate reason was a fire that destroyed most of the mission buildings at Lac qui Parle. Instead of rebuilding, he moved his family and followers to the protection of the government's Upper Agency near the Yellow Medicine and Minnesota Rivers. This post was called Hazelwood. The only person who now remained was Amos Huggins, son of the elder Huggins. He and his wife their two children and their helper, Miss Julia La Framboise, of French and Indian descent, stayed on the Huggins farm on our side of Lake Lac qui Parle (now Lac qui Parle Township). Amos desired to remain with the Indians he had known from childhood, and continue his teachings among them. Our county remained without any more white settlers for ten years, and the reason for this was the great Sioux Uprising of 1862.

Trouble between the White and the Indians

Throughout Minnesota, there had been occasional fights and killings by both Indians and whites for many years, but with the great increase in settlers conditions became steadily worse. The whites demanded more and more land. The Indians were restricted to their narrow reservation. Tribes which before roamed over vast areas were now literally rubbing elbows with each other. They quarreled among themselves, but their greatest grievance was against the whites. The small annuities sometimes failed to arrive on time and left the Indians hungry and angry. Nothing would satisfy them more than an excuse for running the whites out of their old hunting grounds. On the morning of August 17, 1862, came the spark that set off the explosive feelings of the Indians.

Indian Outbreak of 1862

Four Rice Creek Indians found a nest of hen's eggs on the property of a white man. One of the Indians wanted to take the eggs, but another tried to stop him. During the argument that followed the Indian who tried to protect the white man's property was accused of being a coward. Further argument ended with the four agreeing to go up and kill the settler to prove that they were worthy of being called Indian braves. This they did, leaving three men and two women lying dead before they fled to their camp and reported what had happened to their chiefs. Despite the warnings of the more level-headed members, the tribes became excited and decided that this was as good a time as any to wage war against all the white settlers and drive them from their country.

The Indians in our county who were involved in this massacre came from the villages of Chiefs Extended Tail Feathers and Spirit Walker at the mouth of the Lac qui Parle River, and those of the villages of Chiefs Sleepy Eyes, Iron Walker, Red Iron, and Rattling Moccasin in the southeastern tip of our county.

No definite record of the number of settlers killed during this uprising was ever made. It is probable that it was about five hundred. It was also impossible to judge ~~as to~~ how many Indians were killed, for it was their common practice to drag away their dead and bury them secretly.

Massacre Victim in Lac qui Parle

We can safely say that only one man was killed in our county. He was Amos W. Huggins, who had remained to farm and teach his Indian friends.

(The scene of the killing of Huggins can be seen today by taking the road east of the village of Lac qui Parle. Following the hill east over the bridge along the riverbottom one comes upon a few acres of clearing in the

woods. Half buried in the scrub oak are the cellar sites of the Huggins house. Here lived Huggins, his wife, his two children, and Julia La Framboise, a French Indian girl who helped Mrs. Huggins with her work among the Sioux.)

Tuesday, August 19, 1862 was a bright summer day. It was a special day for Mr. Huggins who was working in the fields with some Indians, for it was his birthday. In the afternoon two Indians entered the Huggins house. They were excited and very talkative. They pretended to be deeply interested in the sewing machine Miss La Framboise was using, but left the house shortly before Mr. Huggins returned from his fields. As he was driving his oxen home they crept up and shot him in the back. Julia La Framboise heard the shot and rushed out, but found Huggins dead. Mrs. Huggins hastily threw a blanket over her husband's body and she, with Julia and the children, ran to the home of a half-breed fur trader, ~~by the name of~~ whose name was Lagree. He and Julia returned to the scene of the tragedy, where they found many Indians ransacking the home and carrying away the family belongings. The two half-breed friends buried Huggins and, after Julia had snatched a Bible and other articles, they returned to Lagree's.

But Lagree dared not protect the whites any longer. He took them to the lodge of chief Walking Spirit, who promised to protect Mrs. Huggins and her children. Meanwhile Miss La Framboise disguised herself as a squaw and escaped. Walking Spirit managed to keep Mrs. Huggins and her children during the entire uprising. She was finally rescued by General Sibley at Camp Release on September 26, 1862, one of 269 prisoners--mostly women and children. (Camp Release State Park is located one mile southwest of Montevideo on US 212. Today this 14-acre park has a ~~fifty-one~~ 51- foot granite monument dedicated to those captives who were freed here.)

After much bloodshed the Indians were finally run out of the State

or captured by volunteer troops under the command of Henry Hastings Sibley. Over 300 were condemned to die, but President Lincoln commuted a large number of the sentences. The day after Christmas 1862, thirty-eight Indians were hanged at Mankato. The final result of the uprising was the transfer of the Sioux from Minnesota and the seizure of their land. Many of them were moved to a new reservation site on the upper Missouri River. Others fled into the western hills and prairies. Our county was now free of Indians and ready for settlement.

Early Settlement Slow

Although 9,529 Minnesota homesteads had been taken following the Homestead Bill, no settlers dared enter our county because they feared the return of the Indians. Then, too, the first settlers chose to stay in the hardwood forest area, for they ~~feared~~ believed that soil which grew no trees would grow no crops. And they hated living so far from a supply of wood for fuel and building.

However, developments in farm machinery and the increasing demand for wheat gradually drove people westward and northward, and finally the vast rolling prairies were dotted with large wheat farms.

Boating on the Upper Minnesota River

The spread of settlements up the Minnesota and the need for supplies at the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies made boating on the Minnesota profitable. Of the many boats that started up the river, most of them stopped at Mankato, yet we do have records of two boats which took advantage of high water to come all the way up the Minnesota, to within a few miles of the present South Dakota border.

The first record is that of a captain, John B. Davis, who took his small flat-bottomed boat, the Freighter, up the Minnesota with the hope of crossing into Big Stone Lake and then following down the Red River of the

North. But the water was too low, and he had to abandon the steamboat a few miles within our western border and return with his men to Fort Snelling by canoes. The Indians took everything removable from the beached boat, but for a great many years the hull of the vessel could be seen half buried in the prairie sands, about eight miles below Big Stone Lake.

In April, 1861, the Minnesota River had a big flood. Taking advantage of the high water, a group of rivermen took the Jeanette Robert, a small steamboat, and ascended two miles farther than the Freighter had gone. Reports say that if the crew had wanted to, they could have passed over into Big Stone Lake without trouble. Ten years later the arrival of the Northwestern Railway into New Ulm practically ended all river navigation. Though the period of commercial boating on the Minnesota was brief, credit must be given to these brave men who dared to ascend the dangerous channel and indirectly let the world know about the wonders of our prairie country.

First Settlers

William Mills was the first settler to lay claim to any land after the Sioux massacre. Mills had passed through what is now Lac qui Parle County in 1864 while on a hunting and trapping trip. He returned to the county in 1868, and on April 8th of the same year entered a claim on the land he had previously selected for his homestead. If we were surveyors, we would locate this pioneer farm of Mills in the northwest quarter of section 30, township 118, range 42. However, it is easier to say that the farm was at the junction of State-Aid Road No. 1 and County-Aid Road No. 7, about a mile west of the town of Lac qui Parle.

Pioneer Method of Travel

From 1869 to 1875 most Lac qui Parle settlers came from Wisconsin, Iowa, and eastern Minnesota. Many were influenced by early settlers who wrote

home telling their relatives and friends about the good land.

Villages soon began to spring up, schools were organized, and social life in the community began to take form. By 1870, 1,000 bushels of grain was raised on our wilderness farms.

Yet Lac qui Parle County was without a railroad till 1884. Visitors or settlers before that had to come either by water along the Minnesota River or across country, with oxen or horses, or even on foot.

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"Prairie Schooners" were a familiar sight. The prairie schooner was a four-wheeled wagon with a bow-shaped top covered with canvas. Thus covered, the wagon afforded excellent shelter during bad weather. A common sight along the frontier was one or more of these wagons piled high with household goods, the children riding atop the load, the father or older brother taking turns at driving, and the mother and older children driving the household cattle alongside.

These groups traveled as long as there was light to see the road, the average distance being between sixteen and twenty miles a day. What slowed up travel most were the detours around swamps, and side trips up and down streams to find a suitable place to cross.

Oxen were better than horses, for besides being sturdier, oxen thrived better on the thick prairie grass. The only drawback to using oxen was that they had to be watched more carefully while grazing at night or they would run away.

An amusing story is told of one of the first settlers, Amasa Mehurin, who came to this country in 1872. Late one night he and his family made camp on the farm of William Hull. Mehurin, tired from his day's journey, had carelessly left his hungry oxen by themselves, to graze. When he awoke next morning, two oxen had wandered away. He followed their tracks in the deep grass and found that they had headed back to their old home in Freeborn County. It took Mehurin three weeks to catch and return the oxen to the Hull farm.

(Mr. Hull was one of the first farmers in Maxwell Township. He broke forty acres of land on his homestead in 1871.)

Some of the settlers used saddle horses for travel. Once John Maguire, one of the county's first officers, had been in Renville County on a visit. He had to cross the Minnesota River to get back home, and as there were no bridges, he decided to swim across with his horse. Since it was a hot summer night, Maguire decided to take off his clothes and strap them to the saddle so they wouldn't get wet. Then he swam across with the animal. When he reached the shore he approached his horse to get his clothes, but the horse, not recognizing his master without clothes, gave a snort of fright, and dashed off across the prairie leaving Maguire "embarrassingly exposed to the rays of the then rapidly rising sun and the possible mirth of any who might see him in his predicament." All he could do was to chase his horse. After three miles of running he finally caught the animal, sheepishly donned his clothes, and probably sighed with relief as he pulled his sturdy boots over his bruised feet.

Sudden storms were the common dread of winter travelers in those days. The pioneers were often caught by blizzards during their trips to and from markets, and sometimes with tragic results. Towns and farms were far apart, and when wind and snow swept down on the prairie a traveler could only turn his team loose to shift for itself, and then dig himself into a snow drift and wait till the storm passed, hoping that he would not freeze to death, or freeze his hands or feet, before help arrived. Not uncommonly men were buried by the snow, and their bodies not found until the spring.

The only developed road to this county from eastern Minnesota was the old military trail that was finished in 1857, and which extended from Mendota up the right bank of the Minnesota River to Big Stone Lake. For years the nearest railroads were those through Redwood Falls to the east, Benson to the northeast, and Canby to the south. These railroad-trading centers drew most of the

business from whatever communities sprang up in our county until the railroad reached us.

Early Wild Life

Before we continue with the settlement, ~~in our county~~, we might try to imagine what our country looked like to those who first saw it.

By the time the first permanent settlers came to Lac qui Parle County the buffalo had been driven westward from our prairies, leaving only their bleaching bones. In the summer the marshes were still filled with wild-fowl--geese, brant, bittern, gulls, tern, and others. Cranes and swans flocked here in the fall. The swamps and marshes were covered with thousands of ducks, especially mallards. Prairie chickens abounded in the open country, or sought shelter in the woods and underbrush around the streams and lakes during the winter storms. Not all the birds were beneficial. Blackbirds crossed and recrossed our area in huge flocks. They were a nuisance to the early settlers, for they ate the grain after each planting and caused such losses that bounties were offered to destroy these crop marauders.

The streams were literally alive with suckers, redhorse, buffalo fish, pickerel, pike, bass, and other varieties. Often this supply of game and fish made the difference between starvation and plenty for these early settlers.

Wolves, coyotes, foxes, and badgers roamed the open prairie. Along the streams were raccoon, mink, otter; ~~the~~ beavers, though diminishing in number, ~~was~~ were still numerous enough to add to the funds of the settlers who sold their pelts. This region had no poisonous snakes. And strange as it might seem, the song birds were less plentiful than now. The most dreaded pests of the early settlers were the countless mosquitoes that plagued both man and beast. At times the settlers had to build huge smudge fires to drive these tormentors from their cattle.

Our Wilderness Foliage

The prairie was then covered with thick native grass, spotted here

and there with patches of wild flowers which bloomed in successive varieties as the season advanced. ~~Here and there could be found~~ Patches of wild plum and cherry trees bordering the smaller streams. Only in the bottomlands and on high broken ground were there heavy stands of trees. It was from these protected ~~stands~~ areas of maple, oak, basswood, elm, ash, boxelder, and hackberry that the early settlers found the timber for their building.

The great grass fires in our county were not only disastrous to crops and woodlands, but ~~they~~ were also greatly feared by the early settlers. Once started, these fires rushed onward with the speed of a locomotive, destroying everything in their path. This danger was greatest in the dry seasons, especially in the fall. The settlers were always on the lookout for the tell-tale greyish brown clouds of smoke which warned them of the approaching flames. As protection they would often burn wide tracks around their homesteads to act as firebrakes, while if they happened to be caught by a prairie fire while traveling, they tried to outrace the flames, if the wind were blowing in the right direction. If it was impossible to do this, they tried to build backfires and then, if they had time, rush into the newly burned area which cooled fairly rapidly.

How Early Land Was Acquired

The land formerly a part of the Sioux Indian reservation, the ten mile strip south of the Minnesota River in our county, could be secured from the United States Government under the preemption, homestead, or tree claim laws. Preemption meant that a settler could get title to the land if he made improvements and paid the government land agent $1.25 an acre. A homesteader could get free title by living on his land five years and making certain improvements. The tree-claim law was put into effect to encourage the planting of trees on our then treeless plains. The first set of tree-claim laws demanded that the settler plant forty acres of a quarter section with trees. This was almost impossible, so later the required acreage

was reduced to ten. Many of the patches of older trees now standing are the result of this law.

Typical Problems of Early Settlers

When one of our early settlers came to this region, he first set out his claim. Living temporarily in his wagon or in some make-shift shelter, he would immediately break up a small patch of ground. In this roughly cultivated, upturned sod, which often reached a thickness of a foot, he planted some corn, potatoes, beans, turnips, and rutabagas as food for himself and his animals for the coming winter. Then he broke more land for his next year's crop of wheat, and began building some sort of dwelling for his family and a shelter for his cattle.

Naturally the choicest locations were those near a stream or along a rise in ground where spring water could be had both for cooking and watering animals. These sites usually provided also the timber so necessary for building material and for firewood. From these trees the homesteader cut the rough hewn logs to build his home and barns.

The large cottonwood and elm trees were cut into logs of the required length for the building and then sawed into planks about three inches thick. The sawing was done by hand. The usual method was to place the log on a high platform with one man standing under the log and one on top of it; then they pulled the long rip saw up and down between them. The marking for the cut was made with a string covered with charcoal which was stretched and then snapped leaving a mark to be followed by the sawyers. The finished planks were notched at the ends so that they interlocked at the corners of the building. Many settlers made buildings of the whole or split logs. The same method of notching at the ends was followed as in making plank houses, the only difference being in the thickness of the logs.

Sometimes the cabins were built on the side of a hill with the first

story used as a living room, part of this room being dug out of the ground. The attic or second story was usually used for sleeping quarters. The roof was often made of marsh hay and sod, twisted and thatched together. Where doors and windows were required, the walls on both sides of the openings were fastened with wooden spikes driven into holes bored in the planks for that purpose. The cracks between the planks and logs were stuffed with small bits of wood, and then plastered over with sand and lime plaster or with a mixture of wet clay and marsh hay cut into lengths of from one to two inches. Whitewash was the general interior decoration.

A large cottonwood tree is said to have furnished enough wood for a small building. Some settlers went to the trouble of making rough shingles out of these trees, but most of them used hay and sod. A storage pit in the ground served as a vegetable cellar, and it also was protected with a thatched roof.

As more people came into Lac qui Parle County, the choice places around water and timber were taken up and the only ~~places~~ sites left were out on the prairies. Here, where there were no trees, the settlers had to make their homes of sod. The prairie grass, having grown undisturbed for centuries, had formed a thick mass of roots often a foot deep. The pioneers cut this sod into blocks and laid them in thick walls, much like bricklayers do today. The roof had a base support of rough boards on which slabs of sod overlapped like shingles. Most of these houses had only one door and one or two windows. Though perhaps not so clean as the log structures, these sod buildings were often warmer than log or plank houses. The thick walls provided wonderful insulation against both heat and cold, and many an industrious pioneer mother brightened the interior of her first sod home by whitewashing the gloomy dirt walls.

Heating was the big problem, especially on the prairie. Coal, even

when it could be gotten, was too expensive to use, while wood was too valuable as a building material to be ~~moved~~ burned as fuel. So there soon appeared novel sheet-iron stoves made to burn twisted bunches of marsh hay, but this kind of fuel lasted only about as long and gave about as much heat as one would get today by burning twisted sheets of newspapers. So even the chips from wood-chopping, and the twigs and branches of the trees and bushes were carefully saved for fuel.

Ready-made clothes and dress materials were prized possessions. The ordinary clothes were made from wool, hand-spun or hand-knitted. Most of the socks and mittens were made this way. Even the skins of sheep were tanned and made into coats and robes for bed covers. Gloves and caps were made from the tanned skins of badgers and muskrats, and many coats were made from the skins of dogs. These dogskin coats were nice and warm, but unfortunately they smelt very badly after a rain or snow. The most prized winter coat was ~~that~~ one made of buffalo skin. Such coats weighed from twleve to eighteen pounds, and usually cost from $12 to $15, while a buffalo robe could be bought from $7 to $10. Moccasins were the usual foot covering. The homemade moccasins were of two pieces of fresh hide sewed together so that they could be tied around the ankles with string or hide thongs. They were worn with the hair on the outside, and for warmth were filled with hay. On cold days they were especially warm as the skins froze hard and thus made an excellent protection. Another common footwear in these pioneer days were wooden shoes carved from solid blocks of wood. These also were padded with dry hay for warmth and tied to the ankle with leather thongs. When the bottom of a good boot wore out, the top was usually cut off and nailed to a wooden shoe.

During the years before the railroad reached our county, the nearest flour mill was at Redwood Falls. Because of the difficult journey to this trading center the settlers usually stocked up enough flour in the fall to

last until spring. When supplies ran short, the housewife cracked up some grain in the old coffee grinder. Coffee, tea, and sugar were extremely scarce. Roasted barley served as a coffee substitute, and many common prairie plants were used as substitutes for tea. The sugar substitute was black molasses, not so tasty, but still sweet.

Early Settlement Progresses

William Mills hadn't been located on his homestead long before others began trekking into Lac qui Parle County. Among these early settlers were David P. Lister, E. B. Andrews, John Nash, Sr., David Webb, S. J. Ferguson and, quite appropriately, John Stay. They located northwest, northeast, and southeast of Mills' holdings.

The first large group of settlers was brought by Peter F. Jacobson. Jacobson had come to Lac qui Parle in 1869 to look for a suitable site for his friends. He then returned to Fayette County, Iowa, and brought with him a group of Norwegians that included "forty-two families, teams of horses, and more than five hundred head of cattle and two hundred sheep." They were so well organized that they had little difficulty in allotting themselves choice farm sites. With them came the Reverend Peter Thompson, a Lutheran preacher. He conducted the first church services in what is now Lac qui Parle County; they were held in a grove on the banks of the Lac qui Parle River.

The first claims set up southwest of Mills' farm were those of T. I. Lund and John Maguire who came here in 1869 and settled in what is now Riverside.

Mills and Jacobs laid out the first townsite in the fall of 1869. The town was platted in the same section as Mills' homestead which we have located before. This first town in Lac qui Parle was called Williamsburg. Here a store was built the following spring by Chalmers and Donaldson, and

a little northeast of this townsite another store was opened by E. B. Andrews and L. S. Hines. Then came L. R. Moyer who surveyed the present site of Lac qui Parle village, and soon this more favorable spot wiped out the start at Williamsburg.

First Election

Back in 1866, the state legislature had created a county named McPhail, that took in what is now Lac qui Parle, but the county was never organized. As settlers began to scatter along the west bank of the Minnesota and along the banks of the Lac qui Parle, they decided to hold an election and chose county officers. After the election in the fall of 1869 they took their ballots to Redwood Falls, demanding that their elected officials be approved. The county officials at Redwood had never heard of a county by the name of McPhail, and they insisted that the territory in what is now Lac qui Parle County was still ruled by the county officials of Redwood County, and that the officers chosen at this new election were without power. Thus rudely rebuffed, the settlers returned home, with only the doubtful satisfaction of having held an election.

Settlers by now were beginning to pour into our territory, and conditions were assuming a more settled character. Tragedy and drama interspersed the everyday happenings. On the farm of Mills a baby girl was born in May 1869. Lightning killed Tore Christenson the summer of this same year, and in February 1870 D. P. Lister married Emma Herrgin. There were enough prospective customers in this section to warrant P. F. Jacobson bringing in more than $500 worth of merchandise, and about ten tons of flour on November 28, 1869. Before going for these supplies Jacobson built himself a house, reputed to have the first shingle roof in the county, and later used it as a storehouse and store. This store was abandoned when the present village of Lac qui Parle was laid out by Moyer in May 1871. The first store erected within the present limits of the town of Lac qui Parle was that of H.

Cross & Son. It was used finally as the offices of the county officials, but more of that later.

Lac qui Parle Becomes A County

The disappointment of the settlers in their first election did not stop the agitation for a government separate from Redwood County. The State Legislature finally recognized the demands and approved the creation of Lac qui Parle County on March 6, 1871. For ~~in~~ our county, land was taken from Redwood County, and three commissioners, Browning Nichols, Frederick Ehlers and Calborn A. Anderson, were elected to carry out the organization and name the county seat. They met in the office of T. W. Pearsall, in the village of Lac qui Parle on January 11, 1872 and located the county offices in Lac qui Parle village. On December 27, 1872, the county commissioners created the present Lac qui Parle township out of a part of Cerro Gordo Township which had been created while the area belonged to Redwood County. The first township meeting was held in Lac qui Parle in the schoolhouse on January 12, 1873, and thus began the first of a series of township organizations. The lake on our northeastern border, Lac qui Parle, appropriately provided the township as well as the county with its name. The first meeting of the newly elected county officers was held January 7, 1873 in Mr. Cross's store which he leased to the officers for the fee of $75 a year.

Thus at the village of Lac qui Parle, where once stood the village of four hundred Wahpeton Indians of the Leaf Village band of the poor but proud Dakotas, our county government began. The first settlers are said to have found a number of excavations on the site of the Indian village. These ~~excavations~~ were in the shape of a jug, the entrance being about two feet in diameter and enlarged toward the bottom so that each had the capacity of from thirty to forty bushels of potatoes or corn. But these have long since disappeared. The only reminder of those days are the overgrown cellar holes of the Huggins dwellings in the meadow beyond the bridge southeast of Lac

qui Parle village.

Early Schools

No sooner had the pioneers established their homes than they began to plan a school for their children. The first record of any school being taught in Lac qui Parle County was that of a private Norwegian school conducted in the summer of 1869 by John Hansen on the farm of the Reverend Peter Thompson. The first public school was taught in the village of Lac qui Parle by Airrie Grant in 1872 in a building owned by Browning Nichols. The Board of County Commissioners met in the spring of 1872 and decided to begin an organized system of public schools. The township of Cerro Gordo, which we have mentioned before, had a skeleton school district number, 19. The board resolved that this district, now being a part of Lac qui Parle Township, should be reorganized as School District #1 of Lac qui Parle County.

The early schools were equipped as well as these pioneer parents could manage with homemade material, and with as many books as could be found in the community. Often homes and farm buildings were used until the district could secure funds to build a schoolhouse. The conditions of early school life are illustrated by this written recollection of an early pupil. He wrote:

"School district #6, in Lac qui Parle County, is located in the south east corner of Cerro Gordo Township. It was organized in 1873. The first school was taught by Mary Hauck in 1874. This school was kept in a log granary on the farm of the Reverend Peter Thompson. The building was deficient in door and window space, but light and ventilation were partly supplied through the spaces between the sawed planks of which the granary was built. The term lasted about six weeks in the summer of 1874. This district had no school house for a long time, and for several summers school was kept in the log cabins of pioneer settlers or in a claim shanty on the southwest quarter of

section twenty-six, township one hundred and eighteen, range forty-three, owned by J. F. Jacobson. This claim was built of hand-sawed planks."

He goes on to tell how most of the boys had to work on farms and had little time between hoeing corn to attend school. They had to walk four or five miles, morning and night, and then come home to help with the daily chores. Often the older boys worked together to fix up their ~~old cold~~ school buildings.

The early schools stood usually on a small plot of ground, often poorly drained, and with no trees or shrubs for protection. Most buildings were plain box-shaped structures about twleve feet wide, eighteen feet long and ten feet high. There were few windows, for there was more concern about keeping the place warm than in having good light. The first seats were home-made, but these later were replaced by factory-made desks which were usually too large for the smaller students. Black-painted boards or plaster were used before slate blackboards could be purchased. By 1884 there were sixty-one school districts in Lac qui Parle County, yet conditions of travel and other factors kept so many pupils out of school that only eleven of the districts could boast a perfect attendance of from one to three pupils, and these usually came from the same family.

Other Firsts

The first postoffice was established in the village of Lac qui Parle in 1871 with J. H. Brown as postmaster. The early mail was carried by a messenger paid by the settlers. He made a weekly journey from the village of Lac qui Parle to Chippewa City, a small hamlet located across the Chippewa River from the present city of Montevideo.

At Lac qui Parle village also was the county's first drugstore, operated by Gilbert La Du. Here, too, was the first furniture store, that of Chalmers & King. Until the first hotel was built in 1872 by J. H. Brown, a

dwelling owned by B. Nichols was used as an inn. Here also was established a weekly, the Lac qui Parle Press, ~~established~~ founded by C. J. Coghlan in the fall of 1872. This paper has been published almost continuously, although under various managements, until today, and is now published as the Independent Press at Madison. It is claimed that the Press was the first, and is thus the oldest, paper in our county.

The first district court was held in the village of Lac qui Parle on September 24, 1878, to handle the case of Nils K. Nilson vs. Frederick Swenson. The case was withdrawn, however, and settled out of court.

"Doc" Eaton was the first physician; he arrived at the village of Lac qui Parle in 1870. The dental needs of the inhabitants were handled by visiting dentists for twenty-four years after the county was organized. The first permanent dentist was Dr. H. B. Hurd who located in Madison in 1896.

The first banks were the outgrowth of other business concerns. Often the leading merchants and real estate men found their money so tied up in long-time loans that they were forced to establish a sort of a banking system ~~of~~ for gathering and lending money. The first bank was at the village of Lac qui Parle where H. L. Hayden and W. W. Rhodes carried on a private banking business under the firm name of H. L. Hayden & Co. They later moved to Madison where they became incorporated as the Lac qui Parle County Bank on July 1, 1886.

Our present splendid county fair is the outgrowth of an exhibition arranged by the Lac qui Parle Agricultural Society which was organized on September 20, 1873. It seems that one of the more ambitious pioneer farmers was so proud of his farm products that he wanted to show them to his neighbors, ~~some even claim that~~ and perhaps he wanted to enjoy a holiday after harvest time; at any rate, he organized a meeting for a group of settlers in the Lac qui Parle schoolhouse, and they made plans for the first county fair. It was

held on October 9, 1873 in the village of Lac qui Parle. The next year their meeting was held in the new hotel erected by J. H. Brown and a two-day fair was planned. In 1886 a new fair grounds was constructed at Madison, and the fair was held on September 29, 30, and October 1st. The reason for moving the fair to Madison was that most of the members of the society had changed their residence to this boom town. Since this time all of the county fairs have been held here.

The Lac qui Parle Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, is the oldest continuous church organization in Lac qui Parle County. This organization resulted from the efforts of the Reverend Peter Thompson who settled in what is now Cerro Gordo Township in 1869. The Reverend Thompson, with seventeen members from Baxter, Lac qui Parle, Cerro Gordo, and Riverside Townships, organized the society on October 30, 1870, and worked diligently to have a church building constructed. He left the congregation in 1875, however, although the Lac qui Parle church was not built until the summer of 1876. The pastor of the congregation at this time was Reverend Anfind O. Utheim.

Railroads and Their Effect on Lac qui Parle

For twelve years after Lac qui Parle became a county it had no railroads. Redwood Falls was the closest railroad settlement. As the railroads spread westward, Benson to the northeast, and Canby to the south became the trade centers. With their splendid railway service they drew most of the trade away from the village of Lac qui Parle.

However, in 1884 the Wisconsin, Minnesota & Pacific Railroad completed a line which was operated by the Minnesota & St. Paul Railway Company into Lac qui Parle County. The road entered in the extreme southeast corner of Ten Mile Lake Township, then crossed northwestward to the present city of Madison, and finally headed ~~then~~ due west into South Dakota about midway on the western line of Augusta Township. The coming of the railroad made it much easier to receive manu-

factured goods and to sell farm products. Thus new towns and trade centers literally sprang up over night along the railroad right-of-way. The new towns created on this line were Boyd, Dawson, Madison, and Marietta, all from seven to ten miles apart. Three years later the Benson and Huron division of the Great Northern Railroad entered the upper end of Lac qui Parle County, in the extreme northwest corner of Hantho Township, crossed Lake Shore Township in an almost due westerly direction, then proceeded through the southeast section of Agassiz Township, and across Perry and Walter Townships to enter South Dakota at the extreme southwestern section of Walter Township. The new towns on this line were Louisburg, Bellingham, and Nassua.

There was keen rivalry between all of these newly created towns and the older villages, but the most bitter rivalry was between the boom towns of Dawson and Madison. An example of the bitter struggle between these two towns is shown in these bits of advertising that appeared in papers in the county. "Dawson, the future metropolis of the Minnesota Valley." "The village of Madison, the future metropolis of Lac qui Parle County, located in the exact geographical center of the county on the line of the Wisconsin, Minnesota & Pacific Railroad, in one of the finest farming counties in the state------."

Many of the settlers in and around Lac qui Parle village moved to Madison. Many of them even put their dwellings on rollers and moved them across the prairie to the new townsite. Typical of the attitude of those who moved to Madison was S. E. Farnham, who later was to establish the Independent Press of Madison as a weekly paper. He describes a visit to these two boom towns. "With many warm invitations to come again, we turned our steps toward the duck fields and Lac qui Parle."

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New County Seat Established

Now that the railroads had entered the county, the center of act-

ivity swung to these new railroad boom towns. The railroads had passed up Lac qui Parle village. The inhabitants of Madison believed their town should be the county seat because of its central location. But the people of Dawson also wanted the county seat.

After months of dissension between the politicians and businessmen of both towns, a demand was made for an election to change the county seat from the isolated village of Lac qui Parle to a more centralized place. The election was called for November 2, 1886. Never in the history of this young county had there been so much agitation and such excited arguments. On election day the people of both towns waited nervously for the final returns. Imagine the celebration of the townspeople of Madison when the final count showed that Madison had won by a majority of 457 votes.

The Madison people were in such a hurry to transfer the county records to their town, that ten days after the election a crowd of one hundred and fifty men marched to Lac qui Parle, and took the records back to Madison. A few days later another group ~~of~~ impatient ~~Madison patriots~~ loaded the small frame courthouse on trucks and had it pulled into Madison.

Madison Finally Becomes County Seat

But both of these transfers were made without the consent of the county officials. When word of the activities reached the state capitol at St. Paul, word came back that the election and the moving of the records and the courthouse ~~was~~ were illegal. Injunctions were served to prevent county officers from doing any work except at the Village of Lac qui Parle, and the county records were ordered returned. But the bewildered county officials found themselves with no offices, for the courthouse was still at Madison. Finally they found room in an old store and the county officials again began work in Lac qui Parle.

On March 19, 1889, a new state law was passed allowing the removal

of a county seat with the approval of the voters. The Madison businessmen and politicians immediately filed a petition to have their town named as a new county seat. Dawson and Bellingham eventually filed similar petitions. But at a special election on May 21, 1889, Madison was again declared the winner by a safe margin.

Another problem now arose. The little courthouse was far too small to hold the rapidly expanding county offices. A bill to authorize a $30,000 bond issue for a new courthouse failed in 1889. Dawson seized the chance to get the county seat by offering to donate $20,000 to pay for the cost of the new courthouse in their town. The matter was finally settled when the bond issue was passed by a majority of 163 votes, and Madison retained the county offices.

Lac qui Parle County Grows Up

With the county seat determined and the new courthouse underway, the settlers sighed with relief and settled down to the business of developing their rich agricultural lands. Word of the land's fertility went back to the settlements in eastern Minnesota, to the friends and relatives of our pioneers in Wisconsin, Iowa, and even in the Scandinavian and other foreign countries. This advertising brought many people to the county. From 145 in 1870, the population jumped to 4,891 in 1880, to 10,382 in 1890, and by 1910 reached 15,435. Most of the foreign settlers were Scandinavian, with Norwegians predominating. Later many Germans settled here, mostly in the upper part of the county.

The first settlers permitted their cattle to range at will, but the growing of wheat made this practice impossible, and soon a bill was passed forcing every farmer to fence in his cattle. With a growing season of 132 days (from frost to frost) and a rainfall of 24 inches per year (most of it during the growing season), the early wheat crops often averaged more than

30 bushels to the acre.

But steady crops of wheat year after year reduced the fertility of the land, and the wheat yield began to drop. The farmers then turned to diversified farming. By rotating crops and allowing the land to rest, the fertility of the farms was kept up. Then, too, the development of the wheat-growing lands in the Dakotas and other western states caused the price of wheat to fall, and soon it was more profitable to raise crops which could be fed to cattle. The large industrial centers of the east were demanding more pork, beef, mutton, and dairy products, and farmers found it paid to meet this demand.

In 1935 there were 2,141 farms in our county, and according to the 1935 United States Census the average farm ~~in our county~~ here consists of about 225 acres. Each farm averaged 18 cattle, 7 of which were milk cows, 8 hogs, 5 horses, a flock of 87 chickens, and, on every ninth farm, 12 head of sheep. The acreage was divided as follows: 60 acres of corn, 23 acres of wheat, 32 acres of oats, 20 acres of barley, and 5 acres of flax.

Lac qui Parle today has 21 townships with a total population of more than 15,000, ~~which~~ of whom 10,000 are rural inhabitants. There are seven incorporated villages: Madison with 1,916 people (1935) is the largest, and Dawson, Boyd, Bellingham, Nassua, and Louisburg follow in order of their population.

Of the many churches in our county, the Catholic and Evangelical are most numerous.

Since the days of makeshift schoolhouses, Lac qui Parle County has maintained a splendid educational system. Today there are 106 school districts, in which there are 92 ungraded elementary rural schools with one teacher, four with two or more teachers, four 8-year schools, three 4-year high schools in class "A" and one each in classes "B" and "C". The system is completed with three consolidated, three semi-consolidated and 96 independent schools.

Like their forefathers, the young people are taking an active part in the development of the agriculture of Lac qui Parle County as shown by the presence of ten 4-H clubs with a rapidly growing membership of over three hundred.

Our railroad facilities are excellent. Besides the Great Northern in the upper part of Lac qui Parle County and the Minneapolis and St. Louis in the lower half, we are served indirectly by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul and the Chicago, Great Western Railroads which parallel the northern edge and the southwestern corner of our county respectively.

Instead of the poorly developed trails and wagon roads of 1872, we have now modern highways to keep pace with the development of the present rapid motor traffic. A well graveled and paved highway follows practically the same route as did the rough Military Road along our west bank of the Minnesota River. Where oxcarts and prairie schooners plodded, doing ten to twenty miles a day, modern vehicles now weave in and out of Lac qui Parle County on well-kept highways covering the same distance in less than half an hour. US 212 runs through the south-central part of Lac qui Parle County east to west, a distance of approximately 36 miles, of which 24 miles are paved and the remainder bituminous treated. US 75 crosses the county from north to south and State 119 and 40, serving the northeastern corner, are bituminous-treated. The three bus lines entering our county serve all the principal towns and villages. Three truck lines and nine short-haul lines supplement the railroads in the transportation of products and merchandise. ~~in our county.~~

Most of the marketing of farm products is done through cooperative associations (unions of farmers banded together to secure the highest possible prices for their products).

Theodore Christianson served Minnesota as a State Legislator, and

as Governor (1924-30). He is the present editor and publisher of the Dawson Sentinel, and was once president of the village of Dawson. This well known lawyer was born on a farm three miles west of Lac qui Parle Village on September 12, 1883. He was the eldest son of Robert and Emma (Tollefson) Christianson, early residents ~~of Lac qui Parle County.~~

As one looks over ~~the~~ Lac qui Parle County ~~of~~ today, with its bustling towns and modern well-stocked farms, it seems scarcely possible that less than a hundred years ago ~~our county~~ this was a ~~prairie~~ wilderness, where thick prairie grass thrived on the rich glacial soil, where countless herds of buffalo and roving bands of Indians reigned supreme.

Actually only a little more than sixty years have passed since William Mills' wagon wheels crushed the wiry prairie grass as he slowly plodded along to the first homestead ~~in our county~~. What hardships and heartaches have gone into the making of Lac qui Parle since that time, perhaps will never be fully told. Only a few ruins, monuments, and historic parks recall some of the highlights of our county's history.

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