Minnesota Works Progress Administration: Writers Project Research Notes.

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Version 3
August 20, 2018

22,879 words

THE STORY OF LE SUEUR COUNTY

CHAPTER I

The Pre-Settlement Era

It was the year 1700. Paddling their frail canoes up a mysterious unknown river, a few white men were venturing into the uncharted domain of the Indians. Their dauntless leader was Pierre Le Sueur, and the river was our own Minnesota River.

The men were dressed in fringed buckskin, calico shirts, and scarlet sashes. Their leader sat hunched in the prow of his canoe, wary eyes straining around each bend.

Great limestone bluffs covered with scrub oaks towered above the river. For all they knew, unfriendly Indians lurked there, waiting to heave boulders down upon them, or shoot them with deadly arrows.

For hundreds of miles in every direction stretched the wilderness. Wavy grasses, thick virgin forests, rippling waters, high hills, and blue sky, that was all. To the west one might walk a thousand miles and see no white face. They might all perish here, and no one would know.

But Pierre Le Sueur urged them on, for hundreds of miles up the river. The waters glistened like a polished platter in the September sun. The current often swirled close to white clay banks and around bluffs of handsomely colored rock, limestone, and sandstone. Le Sueur and his men had no way of knowing that one day these rocks would be used to build houses and churches and public buildings. They were in search of richer treasure. Le Sueur dreamed of finding fabulous mines, that would make him rich and honored; perhaps he might even

be titled by his king. He urged his men on, and ever on.

Le Sueur County Was Forged Out of a Wilderness

Today the wilderness Le Sueur found here is a populous country. The Northwest he explored has been divided into states, counties, townships, cities, and villages. This part of the land he journeyed through in 1700 is now our State of Minnesota; lying east of those limestone bluffs is our Le Sueur County.

In south-central Minnesota, Le Sueur is one of the most prosperous of the State's 87 counties. It was one of the first settled, too--one of the oldest in our State. This was because the river was the natural highroad for hundreds of west-bound pioneers, who dreaded the hardships and dangers of unknown dense forests. It was far easier to come by boat up the river. And so they settled, those home-seeking pioneers, along the valley of the river on which Le Sueur had ventured so many years before.

What do we know about the history of our county? Some of it has been lost, perhaps, but there is much we can discover.

The First Inhabitants

Long before the white men came to Minnesota or to Le Sueur County, an aboriginal or first people lived here. Where they came from nobody knows for sure, for they left only a few heaps of earth, a few bones and broken bits of pottery for us to puzzle over.

Their descendants, the American Indians, likewise left scanty records. In Le Sueur County today the Indians are almost forgotten. But a few are still living in Minnesota, and some of their ancient mounds can still be seen.

Indian Mounds

What were the mounds? Nobody knows that for sure either. Some are thought to have been used as burial grounds; others may have served as defense works, or as religious emblems. Some may have served all three purposes.

Though often spoken of as "burial mounds," it must not be thought that the Indians buried dead as we do. They believed that the bones of a man were the sacred part of his body. Therefore when a man died they left the body up on a scaffold of sticks, or in a tree for a time, and when the flesh had disappeared they placed the bones in these mounds, with a few of the dead man's possessions.

At one time there were hundreds--even thousands--of mounds scattered all over south-central Minnesota. But since the white man came they have gradually disappeared, plowed up for farms, roads, buildings, to make way for the white man's way of life.

When our county was young, there were many prominent mounds here, especially near East Henderson, and about a mile and a half southeast of Ottawa, on the bluffs above the river. The largest was ~~about~~ 50 feet across and more than five feet high.

Another group in the bottom lands south of Ottawa was washed away in the high water of 1881. But before that happened curious relics had been unearthed in them. Among the human bones were found a silver wristlet with "Montreal" stamped upon it, copper ear rings, a string of china beads, pins and a needle, a small pearl ornament, a quartz arrow head.

The First White Men

Because we are of the white race, "the coming of the white man" is a phrase that sounds grand to us. But to the Indians it meant something different. To him it proved to be a sort of death knell.

Long before the middle of the nineteenth century ~~where~~ when settlement began, a few daring white men explored the river, and camped on its shore in our county. Perhaps there were others we know nothing about, because they left no records.

Our County Named for Pierre Le Sueur

The explorer for whom our county was named, Pierre Charles Le Sueur, was the first white man known to have ventured up the Minnesota River. It was more than 150 years before the pioneer fathers came to the Minnesota Valley, that he paddled up our river, and passed the present sites of Le Sueur, Ottawa, and Kasota.

Le Sueur in Minnesota

Le Sueur was a French-Canadian, and had visited Minnesota as early as 1683, when, at the age of 26, he was commissioned by the French governor of Canada to establish a post on Lake Superior. Later, about 1690, we think, he came down the Wisconsin River, and then ascended the Mississippi as far as Sandy Lake. Thus he was also the first explorer on the upper Mississippi through central Minnesota.

During a lifetime spent in exploring the Northwest wilderness, Le Sueur established several military posts. Their exact location is somewhat uncertain.

In 1695 one was built on Isle Pelee, now known as Prairie Island, above the head of Lake Pepin, to maintain peace between the Chippewa and Sioux Indians and make the fur trade safe. From there he journeyed to Montreal taking with him the first Sioux Indians to visit Canada.

About that time he heard from the Sioux of a blue-green clay along the banks of the upper Minnesota River. He had long been hoping to find minerals in the new world and now with a sample obtained from the Indians, he sailed to France, where the blue earth was assayed and pronounced to be copper ore.

Immediately he secured a license from the king to explore the copper mines, and made ready to return to America. But in the next three years he had many adventures, his license was revoked, and he was captured by the English

on the high seas.

Le Sueur Comes Up the Minnesota

Finally, in September 1700, he started up the Minnesota River with a small party. They pushed as far as the Blue Earth River, near the present site of Mankato. Here they found the blue-green, shale-like mud that they thought was copper ore.

That winter they established "Fort L'Huiller," named in honor of the chemist who said the mud was copper. They also worked on the mines. In the spring Le Sueur carried a rich load of beaver furs and several tons of the blue earth down the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico, and across the ocean to France. But this time the mysterious mud was found to be worthless.

Those left in charge of Fort L'Huiller had trouble with the Indians, and the site was abandoned in 1701. Soon afterward Pierre Le Sueur died.

Naming the River

Le Sueur called the beautiful river he explored the St. Pierre, or St. Peter's, probably for himself or his patron saint. The early traders and settlers knew it by this name, but later, in 1852, it was officially renamed the Minnesota, from the original Sioux.

From this river our entire State took its name. Minnesota was at first spelled in many ways and was given several meanings. Some say that Minnesota means "the sky-tinted water." Other writers explain that the Indian interpretation should be "River of the bleary (cloudy, muddy, or whitish) water." The Chippewa Indians to the north knew of the stream as "The river of the green leaf."

Another version of the naming of the river tells us that Capt. Nicholas Perrot named the stream St. Pierre, probably in honor of Pierre Le Sueur. Perrot first saw the river between 1683 and 1689, near its mouth.

He speaks of it as the St. Pierre in the proclamation he issued in 1689, when he took possession of the upper Mississippi country for the king of France. At that time, however, Le Sueur was an obscure person in Perrot's employ, so it is doubtful if Perrot named the river for Pierre Le Sueur. In his journals Le Sueur calls the river the St. Pierre without any hint that it was named for himself.

Early records do not say exactly how the name originated. Another guess is that it was named on St. Peter's Day, June 2, in honor of the Apostle.

But whether or not the Minnesota River was at first named for Pierre Le Sueur, we know that a county and city were named for him. From his journals we find that Le Sueur stopped at a "pleasing and fair" spot about "twelve leagues from the mouth of the Blue Earth River, where the shore was level and receded gently to the upland of the east." This description fits Le Sueur pretty well, and is our only record of the famous explorers stopping in our county.

Carver

Years later, in 1766, Jonathan Carver a "Connecticut Yankee," but flying the colors of Great Britain on his canoe, also explored the Minnesota River. Carver claimed in a book of popular travels published later, to have pushed upstream about 200 miles. This has been disputed but if it is true, he, too, must have seen the wilderness that is now Le Sueur County.

At any rate we know that Carver spent the winter with the Indians somewhere on the Minnesota. At the end of April when Carver came back down the river, 200 Sioux accompanied him. He seemed to get along especially well with them. Both Le Sueur and Carver found out many interesting things about the Indians. A few historians, however, think some of Carver's accounts were only "storybook adventures."

Peter Pond

Only eight years later Peter Pond with a small party of men followed the same water route, going past Le Sueur County intent on trading with the Yankton Indians. Peter Pond was an adventurous and influential fur trader. Fragments of his journals have only in recent years been brought to light. He had a post on the lower Minnesota River for two years, 1783-74. In '74 he stopped to see the hut where Carver spent the winter, and says, "It was a Log House about Sixteen feet long Covered With Bark--With a fireplace--But one Room and no flore."

Voyageurs in Mackinaw Boats

These early explorers made way for later exploring trips up the river. After 1800, expeditions became more common. In 1820 a party of Selkirk colonists from the Red River country near the Canadian border returned to their homes, by way of the Minnesota River. They had come down to Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin for seed wheat, oats, and peas, and they took these back loaded on Mackinaw boats.

Mackinaw or keel boats were the usual means of transportation when the cargo or luggage was too big for canoes. They were from 20 to 50 feet long, and 4 to 10 feet wide, and could carry 2 to 8 tons of freight.

The crew used both oars and poles. When the water was shallow, the men would push on their poles and run along a plank at the side to the stern of the boat, then back again at the prow. If they had the current with them, mackinaw boats could make 15 miles a day, but if they were working against it they made only five.

Other Explorers

In 1823, the U. S. Government sent Major Stephen H. Long up the river. Part of this expedition went by land and part by water.

A geologist, George Featherstonhaugh, with a companion, William W.

Mather, came in 1835 to study the earth and rock formations. Later he wrote a book called "A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor."

George Catlin, a famous painter of Indians, arrived the next year to see the pipestone quarries in southwestern Minnesota.

In 1838 two well known explorers, Joseph N. Nicollet and John C. Fremont came up the river on a geographical survey of the region. There were six men in the party. They came by land up the east side of the river, crossing over to the west side shortly below the site of Ottawa. It was on this trip that Nicollet made his map published in 1843, the first good map ever made of Minnesota.

How Le Sueur County Became American Soil

Several times, while explorers came and went, while foreign government prospered or declined, while wars were won or lost, our Minnesota Valley changed ownership. First there were only the Indian tribes. But they knew nothing of owning land in our sense of the word. They merely wanted the food--the game and the wild rice for their tribes and fought each other for the right to use it. Then came the pale faces claiming the land for nations across the Atlantic.

In 1689 Nicholas Perrot, as we have seen, claimed all the Minnesota region for France. His proclamation was made from Fort St. Antoine on Lower Lake Pepin. Pierre Le Sueur was there and signed the document.

Almost a century later, at the close of the French and Indian Wars in 1763, all lands east of the Mississippi belonging to France were ceded to England. The year before this cession, to keep them from the English, France gave her lands west of the Mississippi to Spain. So, although that ownership was merely on paper, Le Sueur County was at one time Spanish soil.

Next, through the Revolutionary War, English soil in this country became American, and soon the Spanish possessions here were given back to France. Finally, by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the United States bought

from France the lands west of the Mississippi.

Though all Minnesota was now American soil, the land was still claimed by the Indians, and in 1805 the Government sent Lieutenant Zebulon Pike up the Mississippi. One of his orders was to pick out some good sites for military posts.

Pike obtained two grants of land, one at the mouth of the St. Croix and one at the mouth of the Minnesota. For all the acres, now worth millions, he paid the Indians about $200 worth of trinkets and 60 gallons of whiskey.

Nothing was done about erecting a fort till 1819. In that year Col. Leavenworth and his soldiers arrived to start Fort St. Anthony (later called Fort Snelling) at the mouth of the Minnesota. From Fort Snelling the long fingers of white civilization began to reach out into the Minnesota wilderness.

Traders and the Fur Trade

Trade in furs was the most important factor in opening up the Northwest. Bartering with the Indians for pelts and selling these to eastern markets brought riches to many. The French from Canada were the first to develop our Minnesota fur trade. The "coureurs des bois," or messengers of the woods, sometimes did their trapping themselves, but more often they traded blankets, and trinkets, and whiskey for the Indians' furs.

A few adventurers came into the Minnesota Valley and built cabins before the land had been bought from the Indians and officially opened to settlement. These were mostly fur traders and missionaries. As far as we know, there were no early mission stations within the present bounds of Le Sueur County, but nearby stations were at the site of Shakopee in Scott County, and at Traverse des Sioux, near the site of St. Peter in Nicollet County.

Many of the traders had obtained a government license to operate trading posts in the closed Indian territory. Others, mostly French and halfbreed

traders, had been in the Northwest country since before 1800 and did pretty much as they pleased.

After this region became American soil, the Frenchmen, who remained transferred their allegiance to the United States. Furs then were brought to the Mendota headquarters of the American Fur Company. From there they were shipped down the Mississippi, and eventually to New York, to be made into beautiful caps, robes, and coats.

It is thought that early fur traders may have passed up and down the river with packs of furs even before 1700. After 1800 such trips were made more often. But few frontiersmen leave records of their journeys in a strange land, so the deeds of most of them are soon forgotten.

We know of a few, however. James H. Lockwood, an American-born trader, had a post on the upper river at Lac qui Parle and came up the Minnesota in 1816. Charles Le Page, a Canadian, came down the river from the west in 1803 and went on to Fort Snelling. He was accompanied by a party of Sioux Indians.

Charles Patterson had a trading post on the upper river, far above Le Sueur County, as early as 1783. He, too, may have passed our county. Joseph Renville, John Campbell, and Hazen Mooers were others who had posts on the upper river between 1826 and 1834. These men quite probably made several trips down the Minnesota with loads of furs, but we have no proof of this.

The traders, especially the French and halfbreeds, were picturesque fellows. They wore gay-colored skin garments, bright shirts, and broad waist-bands or sashes, in which they carried knives. In winter they wore buckskin coats and beaver caps.

Many of the traders and soldiers who came into this wilderness married Indian girls. Before the country was opened to settlement there were almost no white women here, and it was natural that the frontiersmen should marry among

the Indians. Many children of such marriages, whom people sometimes called "half-breeds," became famous characters in Minnesota history.

Unfortunately many traders made a business of taking advantage of the Indians. Not every trader gave them a fair deal, and the Indians' ignorance of white men's ways placed them at the mercy of those who were shrewd and dishonest. One trader objected to missionaries because he said that they took $100 out of his profits every time an Indian was taught to read.

The animals trapped were chiefly muskrat, beaver, mink, otter, fisher, badger, marten, bears, wolves, rabbit, deer, and fox. Buffalo hides were very valuable in Minnesota, and thousands of buffaloes were killed, but this creature of the prairies probably never ranged as far east as Le Sueur County. In return for pelts the traders gave the Indians blankets, guns, ammunition, tobacco, knives, kettles, looking glasses, colored cloth, flints, and whiskey.

Traders in Le Sueur County

Extensive trade with the Indians of the middle Minnesota Valley was established about 1830. In 1829 the American Fur Company sent Louis Provencalle, a French Canadian, to take charge of a post at Traverse des Sioux, just across the river in what is now Nicollet County.

Old documents of the company tell us that countrymen of Provencalle went into the Big Woods east of the Minnesota River in search of furs. They trapped along our lakes and streams and pitched camp within Le Sueur County, but there is no record of permanent settlement in this period.

Martin McLeod and his Trading Post

Another fur trader in the Minnesota Valley and a prominent figure in the history of our State was Martin McLeod, who once operated a trading

post in what is now Le Sueur County, just across the river from Traverse des Sioux.

Martin McLeod was born near Montreal, Canada. Before he came down into the Minnesota Valley as a fur trader he was a member of "Dickson's army." Dickson, said to be an Englishman, was head of an expedition that set out from Buffalo in 1836, intending to go by way of the Great Lakes to the Red River Colony of the Hudson Bay Company near Winnipeg. It appears that Dickson, as a part of his fantastic scheme, meant to recruit an army of half-breeds there, who were to strike out across country to the Missouri River, ascend the Missouri and go from there to the Rocky Mountains. The final object of this trek seems to have been an attack on the colony of Santa Fe, after which, with the wealth of Santa Fe behind him, Dickson would set up an Indian kingdom in California, with himself as ruler.

As a beginning Dickson gathered together in Buffalo a band of young adventurers, whom he commissioned as officers in his "army." Once in the California kingdom, they were to be his statesmen. Martin McLeod went with this group, chiefly perhaps for the chance of seeing the unknown Northwest, for he says of Dickson in his diary, "But if I may judge from so short an acquaintance, he is somewhat visionary in his views."

The story of their travels reads like a storybook tale. The expedition reached Fond du Lac at the head of Lake Superior on Oct. 22, 1836, and started up the St. Louis River by canoe. Before the river froze they had got about as far as Lake Winnibigoshish. From there they had to travel by foot. A mere remnant of the expedition finally straggled into Fort Gary, now Winnipeg, on December 20th.

That seems to have been the end of Dickson's dream. Nothing more came of his project, and it is said that Dickson himself wandered off among the Indians.

But Martin McLeod, one of the survivors, started south down the Red River Valley on February 26th. As far as Lake Traverse he traveled by foot, through terrible blizzards in which one of his companions perished. From Lake Traverse he went by cart down the Minnesota Valley to Traverse des Sioux, then by canoe to Fort Snelling. He got there on April 16, 1837.

Soon afterward, he entered the employ of Benjamin E. Baker, a well known fur trader, staying with Baker from '37 to '39, during which time he made several trips down the Mississippi to St. Louis. Although his diaries, which can be read at the Minnesota State Historical Society, do not mention a wife, it is known that he was married to a Dakotah woman.

McLeod spent the winter of '39-40 on the St. Croix River. On Nov. 2, 1840, he came up the "St. Peters" to build a trading post in Le Sueur County. By the 13th, the cabin, 15 by 20 feet, was ready. There, with an interpreter, the interpreter's Indian wife and two children, a dog, a gun, and a few books, he made ready to settle down for the winter.

From an entry in his diary, written that November, we find the following comment on the life of a trader: "There is no life more dull and monotonous than that passed by the Indian traders during the winter season." His main diversion seems to have been reading. His books were the Bible, and works of Byron, Scott, Dickens, and Locke. Some books, he says, he read a hundred times. Byron was his favorite.

On December 7 he wrote: "Went to an Indian encampment of seven lodges near Prairie la Flech, eight miles distant, and returned at 3 p. m." McLeod's "Prairie la Fleche" was most probably along a river of the same name, a river of our county now known as Spring Creek.

Later, during the coldest part of the winter of 1841, he made a journey overland to the mission station and trading post at Lac qui Parle. On the way back his party of nine had all they could do to keep from freezing to death.

His notes on this journey say: "David Faribault and myself were obliged to dismount from our horses every mile or two to run and thereby keep up a circulation, and although we had buffalo robes wrapped around us, still we could not keep our bodies warm. As for my hands, it was with great exertion that I saved them. On our faces we had buffalo robe masks, and yet got our noses, ears, and cheeks frozen."

The winter of 1840-41 was the only year Martin McLeod spent at his post in Le Sueur County, but several years of his life were passed as a fur trader in the Minnesota Valley. In later times he played a part in developing the new State of Minnesota.

Among other things, he helped to bring immigration from Canada. He was a member of the Territorial Legislature during four sessions, and was elected president of the 4th. He worked hard to establish a sound educational system in Minnesota. One of our Minnesota Counties is named in his honor. He died in 1860 when he was only 47 years old.

We remember him as an Indian trader, and the first known white man to build a cabin in Le Sueur County.

The Indians in Le Sueur County

Who were the Indians in Le Sueur County with whom the fur traders bargained? We have said that Le Sueur in 1695 sought to make peace with the Sioux and Chippewa Indians. Both of these tribes ranged the Minnesota country, and both were constantly seeking the other's scalp.

But by 1800 the Sioux were mostly confined to southern and western Minnesota, while the Chippewa lived in the north country. The Sioux family was composed of many divisions, and once they roved from the Mississippi almost to the Rocky Mountains, and south as far as Arkansas. Other branches lived in the East and South, in the Carolinas, Virginia, and Mississippi.

The Sioux who inhabited Minnesota were called the Dakotahs, and of

these there were several divisions or subtribes. There were other tribes and families in Minnesota, among them the Chippewa and the Winnebagos.

The Winnebagos were a peaceful tribe, members of the Sioux family and usually on friendly terms with both Chippewa and Dakotahs. The Chippewa or Ojibway Indians were members of the Algonkian family, who had wandered westward from the region of Lake Huron. They called the Minnesota Indians they found here, Nadouessioux, meaning enemies, and thus arose the name, Sioux.

The Dakotahs

"Dakotah" is a word that means freely a "union of friendly tribes." The Dakotah peoples once lived in northern Minnesota and about Lake Mille Lacs. But long before the white settlers came to Minnesota the Chippewa began to drive the Sioux out of their ancestral hunting grounds, and later, when the traders around Lake Superior began supplying them with "thunder sticks," They were able to drive the Dakotahs rapidly south and west. Some pitched their tepees along the Minnesota Valley. About 100 years before the white settlers came here, then, Dakotah campfires glowed in Le Sueur County, from where they had driven other tribes. Among these were the Iowas, another division of the Sioux family, who are supposed to have wandered as far north as the Minnesota Valley. It was the Dakotahs whom the first white settlers found here.

Subtribes of the Dakotahs in Le Sueur County

One branch of the Dakotahs, the Wahpekutes, had a village where Faribault is now. Another branch, the Sissetons, had their headquarters around Swan Lake (now dried up) and near Traverse des Sioux in Nicollet County. One of the Sisseton villages was at Mankato. Two famous Sisseton chiefs lived near Traverse des Sioux, Red Iron and Sleepy Eyes.

To the north a band of the Wahpeton Indians had a village at the Little Rapids, on the west side of the river near what is now Carver. A little farther down stream were the Indians of Chief Shakpe, a band of the M'dewakanton, or Spirit Lake peoples, one of the famous subtribes in Minnesota.

These were wandering tribes and when away from their home villages probably did not stay at any one place for long. It is possible that most of the subtribes at one time or another had camps in Le Sueur County.

Indian Life

Before the white men came the Dakotah Indian led a simple but self-sustaining life. His home was a lodge of poles and bark. Skin tepees were used in warm weather. His meat was roasted over a fire on a dirt floor. Stone or bone knives were the only utensils, arrows and spears the principal weapons, skins their clothing.

Braves or warriors wore a breech cloth, sandals, and a fur blanket. The squaws wore jackets, short skirts, a head band, and sandals. The children wore nothing in summer.

After the traders came in, some of the braves wore leggins or trousers and cloth jackets. Young and old were fond of gaudy colors, bead necklaces, and bright paints. The squaws often embroidered intricate designs on their skirts or petticoats. Moccasins were beautifully decorated with beads and dyed porcupine quills.

Young Indian girls had to learn to cook, dress furs, and bring in wood. Sioux boys learned to use the bow and arrow, went hunting, fought make-believe battles, and were taught to endure pain without a sign.

When a young brave wanted a wife, he had to buy her. The average payment was a horse, four or five guns, and six or eight blankets, a total value of around $30 to $40 in our money.

An Indian brave regarded it as disgraceful to do physical labor other than that of providing food for the family by hunting and fishing. A story is told that a Le Sueur County farmer one year raised over 400 bushels of potatoes, for which there was at the time no market. He offered them to a party of Indian braves that came by.

The braves refused to carry away more than one potatoe each. The next day they came back with their squaws, who put the potatoes in blankets, and carried them on their backs. Behind them walked the braves, each again carrying one potato.

Wildrice was gathered by the Indians from several lakes in Le Sueur County. This, too, was the work of women. They paddled canoes through the rice marshes and knocked the ripe grain into their canoes with hooked sticks. Sometimes they tied the green canes in bunches to keep the birds from eating the rice when the kernels ripened.

Indian Sports

Among the braves, games such as la crosse were not infrequent pastimes. La crosse was a sort of a ball game played with crooked sticks tied across the end with deer strings. The ball was either a round piece of wood or clay covered with hide. The object was to carry the ball beyond certain set goals.

Sometimes entire villages played la crosse with two or three hundred men on the field. Those on the sidelines usually bet on the outcome as people often bet on games now. Sometimes valuable property changed hands during a single game.

In other ways, too, the Indians were fond of gambling. "Plum stones" was a game in which marked plum stones were shaken in a bowl like dice. When the marked ones turned up, the stake was won. Another betting game was played with kernels of corn.

Footracing was another amusement, and pony fights were also quite common. And, of course, there were many rituals, and ceremonial dances to the beat of tom-toms.

Superstitions and Good Medicine

Anything that he could not understand, the Dakotah Indian called "Wakan," and worshipped it. He had many gods. Trees, stones, plants, rivers, sun, rain, and thunder, any of these might be sacred to him. Almost every Indian had his own particular good luck gods.

The Dakotas called their medicine doctors "Wakan men." Some of these treated wounds and illnesses with certain herbs or roots, or by giving sweat baths. The Indians had learned the medicinal value of a great many plants, and used them often with good results.

Some Indian medicine men depended on magic. Such Wakan men were like fakirs. Their ceremonies, shaking gourd-seed rattles, leaping or dancing, and uttering weird noises over the patient seem strange to us, though perhaps he himself believed in his own healing power. Each medicine man had his own special ritual.

The Arduous Life

Many people think of Indians as men of powerful physique and long life. But Samuel Pond, a missionary at Shakopee, who knew the Dakotahs well, said that the Sioux Indian seldom lived as long as white men. For this there was very good reason. Exposed to hunger, cold and storm, without medical care or knowledge of proper hygiene, the death rate was high among them, even before the white man brought diseases, such as smallpox that took a fearful toll. Furthermore, they were almost constantly at war with their bitter enemies, the Chippewas.

Although later the government punished any Indian attack upon whites, it paid little attention to killings among the Indians themselves, and the

bitterest, most destructive warfare continued among them.

Influence of the White Men upon the Indians

Even after the white man came with plow and hoe, the Indians raised very few crops; not much besides a little corn, squash, and pumpkins. They enjoyed raw pumpkins as we do apples.

After the fur traders came, and game became scarcer, they depended more and more on the white men, trading furs for food, clothing, and ammunition. Unfortunately they also traded their furs for the whiskey that helped destroy them.

After the white men came, too, many of the Indians learned to beg, sometimes threatening those who did not grant their petty requests. At mission stations they would remind the missionaries that since they had come to do good, they should gladly share anything they had.

So, with the coming of the white men everything changed for the Indian. He found himself in a new world and one that had little use for his ancient ways.

CHAPTER II

Early Settlement Era

The actual settlement of our State began around the mouth of the Minnesota and along the lower St. Croix Rivers.

After the coming of the fur traders, and explorers, people began to hear of the fertile lands in the beautiful valley of the Minnesota River. Then steam boats appeared on the scene and exploration and settlement of the upper valley, including Le Sueur County, began in earnest.

Early Steamboating on the Minnesota River

Minnesota was still very young when steamboat traffic was established on the Father of Waters. In 1823 the Virginia churned up the Mississippi to

Fort Snelling. This was the first steamboat on the upper Mississippi. Not until 1842, however, did a steamer venture up the Minnesota, astonishing the Indians and disturbing the age-old peace of the river. That first boat was the Argo, an excursion steamer that went only as far as Shakpe's village, where Shakopee now stands.

Several years passed before there was any further navigation of the Minnesota, and regular steamboat traffic did not begin until the summer of 1850.

The first vessel to come up the river that year, arrived on June 28. An excursion boat, the Anthony Wayne, piloted by Captain D. Able, came from St. Louis up the Mississippi to St. Paul where Minnesota excursionists joined the expedition. At Fort Snelling a military band came on board, and with flags flying, music, and a liberal supply of food and drink, the boat proceeded gaily upstream, all its passengers eager to see the valley of the Minnesota whose beauties were fast becoming famous.

On that first trip the Wayne went only as far as the present town of Carver, but she proved that the river was practical for craft much larger than keel boats. News of her successful voyage spread like a prairie fire. River pilots began to compete, each trying to carry his boat farther upstream than any before him.

First the Nominee with another excursion party steamed three miles farther up river beyond the point reached by the Wayne. About a week later the Wayne, not to be outdone, came up the river again. This time she passed the oak-covered bluffs of Le Sueur County and went almost as far as the site of Mankato.

The Yankee

Within a week another boat tried to outdo them all. This, too, was an excursion, with many gaily-dressed women aboard. The second night out, some of the passengers danced on the grassy prairie, until swarms of mosquitoes

forced them back to the boat.

Before sunrise on the third day the Yankee passed the marker showing how far upriver the Anthony Wayne had come. That night the Yankee anchored a little above the site of Judson in Blue Earth County. They intended to go on, but the temperature was about 104°, clouds of mosquitoes made sleep almost impossible; the crew was worn out, and food supplies were dwindling. So, the steamer headed about, after reaching the mouth of the Cottonwood River, some 300 miles upstream.

After 1850 steamboats were a common sight on the Minnesota River. Many of the prominent people of the Minnesota Territory and of eastern states as well, took these trips up the river.

Indian Treaties

It was at Traverse des Sioux, just across the river from Le Sueur County, and at Mendota, that the famous treaties of 1851 with the Dakotah Indians were made. By these pacts all the Minnesota territory west of the Mississippi was opened to settlement. In exchange for these lands the Indians were to receive a cash payment and grants of money. The only land reserved for the Indians was a strip ten miles on each side of the upper Minnesota River commencing near New Ulm and extending to what is now the western boundary of the State.

Many of the chiefs were opposed to the treaties. But perhaps none of them really understood what the treaties meant. They did not picture fenced-in farms and thriving villages. To them the land was a hunting ground, and they never realized that the white people would come by thousands to occupy the land the Red Men had roamed freely over for so long. They were interested more in the immediate payments, the bright-colored blankets, trinkets, and provisions, and the "fire water" that could be bought with the purchase money. The traders, missionaries, and white friends whom they trusted advised them

to sign and finally they agreed. It was about the only thing that they could do.

The treaties went into effect in 1853, after which the Indians began to move to their Reservation. But for some years many continued to visit their old hunting grounds in other parts of the State, to the annoyance of their white successors.

A New Era

To the white men the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux was ~~equally~~ important, for it was destined to change the complexion of the entire valley. Soon they were free to come in, choose the best land, and start farms and homesteads. For these new pioneers were seeking permanent homes. Their wives and children came with them and they wanted to establish schools, churches, stores, in short all that a new ambitious community could require. From eastern states adventurous and land-hungry families began to come westward and were soon followed by people from foreign lands. More and more settlers pushed up the river, and into Le Sueur County, to plow the virgin soil, hew farms out of the forests, build cities and villages, where the wilderness had been.

The First Settlers in Le Sueur County

History is usually interested in the man who first does anything of importance. So we ask, "Who was the first settler in Le Sueur County?" But it is hard to answer this question with certainty. Few of the pioneers left any record of their affairs. They had other things to do if they were to gain a foothold in the new land.

Kasota

At least we know that the first settlements were along the river valley, at Kasota and Le Sueur. This was before the treaties went into

effect and before the land was surveyed, so the settlers had no right here, but they looked forward to the time when their claims would be legal. Ottawa, also in the river valley, was the third settlement.

Reuben Butters, for many years the oldest inhabitant in the upper Minnesota Valley, claims to have been one of the first three permanent settlers to come to Le Sueur County. Butters was a Yankee, born in Maine in 1816, and in the fall of 1851, ~~first~~ Le came up the river by steamboat. Two other men, George W. Thompson and James Lindsey, were with him. They brought some lumber, and built a one-story house, the first board house in our county, on the site of Kasota, probably fifty miles from the nearest white settler.

Butter's claim as the first man on the site of Kasota is sometimes disputed. J. W. Babcock is also said to have been here in 1851. Probably the two men came about the same time. Babcock built the first sawmill in Le Sueur County in 1852, and in 1854 he operated a ferry across the river to St. Peter. He was also the first to use the handsome pink building stone known as "Kasota stone." He became known as the "father" of Kasota with its stone quarry industry, and it was he who in 1854 had the townsite surveyed and platted.

When Babcock platted Kasota, the village was within Blue Earth County. He worked hard to have Kasota made a part of Le Sueur County in 1855, hoping that the town would be made the county seat. In the end, one half of the former Kasota township remained in Blue Earth, and the other half became part of Le Sueur County.

But Kasota never became the county seat. Probably its importance was overshadowed by the growth of St. Peter, across the river, which was nearer the well known site of the trading post at Traverse des Sioux.

In an account of a Minnesota River trip made in 1853, the writer mentions Kasota as follows: "A few miles farther up, we passed Babcock's

Landing, and presently the place where Kasota is to be. We understand Mr. Babcock has his sawmill in fine order and running, and that houses are fortwith to be built in Kasota with lumber therefrom..... (The mill) is termed an over-shot wheel and muley saw--which is rapping away in fine style at the rate of 8,000 or 9,000 feet a day, with some 500 logs on the ground, ready for a brisk summer's business. Basswood, and different varieties of oak, huge cottonwood, plenty of black and white walnut, with hackberry and ash, are his principal timber, and there is plenty of it."

The account continues: ".....the new town of Kah-so-tah has just been laid out, on a most beautiful site; and as it commands an extensive back country, with convenience of access to it, and facilities for a fine ferry, and the best point I know of for a bridge in case the railroad from Dubuque should ever come in this direction. I think it will grow into a town of some importance equal to Le Sueur, below it.....Its convenience to Babcock's mill will facilitate its growth; for the difficulty of obtaining lumber is the most serious drawback generally experienced by new towns in their early starting.....We understand also that some eight or ten of the Northampton colony have settled in the vicinity of Kasota, and are much pleased with the country."

The colonists here referred to, emigrated from Northampton, Mass. Organized by the Minnesota Claim Association, they had intended to settle in Minnesota as a unit, but on their arrival at St. Paul they broke up into several groups. One of these came to Kasota.

The first hotel in Kasota was the "Old Nick" house, a log structure with a frame addition. Here was born Babcock's son, who was to carry on the stone quarry industry started by his father. Babcock's claim on Chankaska Creek at the north edge of Kasota was known as Babcock's Landing. Milling also early became important to Kasota, and waterpower was used to grind the wheat. The Kasota Mill completed in 1868 was at one time one of the most complete water mills in the State. Its water wheel measured 24 feet from

Another early industrial interest in the Kasota locality was a lime kiln, that manufactured lime from the Shakopee limestone found there. Indeed Kasota village was for a short time known as "Lime."

James Lindsey moved away from Kasota in 1855. Of the town's three first pioneers, Reuben Butters, the only one who remained there, became an influential man in the Minnesota Valley. He was a member of the first State legislature, and served seven terms. He was also County Commissioner and held several other public offices.

The City of Le Sueur

Babcock, Thompson, and Lindsey spent that first winter, 1851-52, together. In February they built a log house downstream. This was the first house in Le Sueur. When spring came (1852), Thompson went to the new location and took a claim. This was the first claim on the site of modern Le Sueur, and was near where we believe Le Sueur camped when he journeyed up the river in 1700.

Soon after Thompson staked out his claim, three other men, Henry McClean, John Christy, and John Cathcart arrived with a government license to trade with the Indians in that territory. These Indian traders wanted Thompson's claim for their ~~our~~ own purposes so they erected their own log house and forced Thompson to vacate. Some say that their's was the first log house in Le Sueur. However, many of the town records were destroyed by fire in 1866, so it is hard to be sure about some of these things.

Thompson then staked out another claim about a mile upstream. The log house he built there was a landmark for many years.

In June, 1852, J. M. Farmer, James Kern, and Alexander Ray came into the new country and purchased two-thirds interest in Thompson's claim. They then laid out a village and called it Le Sueur.

In the meantime the three Indian traders downstream had also surveyed their plot of land for a town and they also chose the name Le Sueur. But the developers of Thompson's claim got ahead of their rivals by having their town recorded in the official records, so the McLean-Christy men changed the name of their town to Le Sueur City.

Not content with two Le Sueurs, another group of pioneers laid out a third townsite between the first two and called it Middle Le Sueur. This third attempt did not do so well, but between Upper and Lower Le Sueur a keen rivalry persisted until 1867 when the rivals finally united, and grew up as one town. Because of the way Thompson was forced to give up his claim, considerable dispute later arose over the ownership of Le Sueur City property.

Those who came into the Minnesota Valley before the land was legally open to settlement were sometimes called "Sooners." The "sooners" had to rely on public sympathy to protect their interests, and often protested their rights through signed appeals in the newspapers.

Thompson, the founder of Le Sueur, did not remain long in our county. About 1854 he went to St. Anthony, and the next winter was accidentally shot. McLean, Christy, and Cathcart left in the later fifties; Christy was killed by Indians in Nebraska, and Cathcart in the Civil War. Only Butters and J. M. Farmer were still in Le Sueur County three decades later.

In a letter written in 1893, J. H. Swan relates that he and his brother, W. W. Swan, and cousin, Otis Young, came to Le Sueur in April, 1851. Historians have thought it more probable that this date should be 1852. We may safely assume that Kasota was the first point of settlement in Le Sueur County, although closely followed by the city of Le Sueur.

The man who described Kasota on his voyage on the West Newton, also gave this picture of Le Sueur: "We journey along finely, and are soon at Le Sueur City. This beautiful and eligible townsite we have frequently alluded to during the past months, and right glad were we to approach it, now

that it has donned the habiliments of civilized life and business. It is a place that must ever gladden the eye of the traveler as he passed from the thick and monotonous foliage of the 'Big Woods' which skirts either side of the river for miles and miles below. Le Sueur again comes out to the river's bank after we pass a bend of bottom land of a mile or two in extent. It is only half a mile, however, across the prairie from the lower to the upper landing, and eventually the extremes, like the upper and lower ends of St. Paul, will meet, forming one continuous town. Both landings exhibit the most encouraging signs of progress and business activity. Settlers are rapidly taking up good farming claims in the vicinity; all going to show that Le Sueur has a 'sure thing' of becoming a place of note."

Other early references to Le Sueur state: "At the head of the Big Woods is Le Sueur, a place which the capital and enterprise of merchants in St. Paul have already made attractive; situated on a slope rising gradually from the shore, in the midst of a fertile and lovely country." That the enterprise of St. Paul merchants was responsible for making their town attractive, however, would probably have been denied by its early citizens.

Early Growth of Le Sueur

Another early settler at Le Sueur was Patrick Cantwell, who came here in the spring of 1852, when there was only one shanty on the village site. Patrick Cantwell and his brother Henry operated a sawmill that made lumber for the buildings in Le Sueur.

In 1853 George Risedorph took a claim near here and operated the first hotel business in the new town. True to Le Sueur's fashion of doing things by threes, K. K. Peck and Ira Myrick soon afterward built two other hotels in Le Sueur. Steamboat crews were constantly stopping at the village and they did a prosperous business, as speculators, promotors, and homeseekers.

From 1867 to 1869 Le Sueur's chief hotel was the famous Excelsior House. This hostelry of 23 rooms was erected just in time to accommodate the many excursionists who visited Le Sueur in 1867 when the railroad came. After the Excelsior House went up in flames in 1869 it was replaced by the three-story brick hotel known as The Higgins House.

Among the first business places in Le Sueur, today the largest city in our county, were a few stores, a blacksmith shop, wagon works, and a cooper shop. The first hardware store was operated by Charles Sheffler. W. H. Patten an early merchant and later a State legislator, came here in 1854. H. C. Smith, another early merchant, came in 1855. His general store on the corner of Main and Ferry Streets was for many years one of the best known pioneer stores in our county.

K. K. Peck, appointed Le Sueur's first postmaster in 1853, was also the first postmaster in the county. His daughter, Mary Le Sueur Peck, was the first white child born in Le Sueur County. The first election was held in the open air in the fall of 1853 near Peck's house.

Among other notable figures, we should mention C. M. Cosgrove and George M. Tousley, ferryman, landowner, and sheriff. The old Tousely home built about 1855, is the oldest remaining residence in Le Sueur. Cosgrove was founder of the Minnesota Valley Canning Company, and later was called "Le Sueur's greatest citizen."

Kasota and Le Sueur, then, were the first settlements in our county. Both were well started before there began the immigration of thousands who turned our county from a wilderness to a populated country-side in a few short years.

Before we tell of further settlements, we should know what made these immigrants come and something of our county as they found it.

CHAPTER III

Inducements to Immigration and Natural Setting

The Land Craze

By the time the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux had been ratified in 1853, townsites had been staked out for hundreds of miles along the Minnesota Valley. From the river, landseekers pushed inland, and in a half dozen years each section of Le Sueur County had received its share of settlers.

Some of the land was seized by real estate speculators, instead of being taken for homes, and many villages were founded by men who had nointention of living on the land.

Cheap lands attracted the easterner as well as the immigrant from overseas. By the "Pre-emption Act" a settler could take a claim to 160 acres of land by driving stakes around his plot, building a home, living in it six months, and plowing a little ground. When he was able, he could "prove up" and become owner of the land by paying $1.25 an acre. The best land was taken by those who got there first, and sometimes these were re-sold for anywhere from $200 to $2000.

The financial panic of 1857 slowed up speculation for a time, and many real estate traders were forced to get out on their claims and raise corn to keep alive. After that the land was more often taken by those who actually meant to settle on it.

In the early days it was easy to get land. Government land grants were made to railroads, war veterans, and also for schools. In 1862 The Homestead Act was passed, providing that an immigrant could get land merely by living on it and paying a small fee.

Claim Jumping

Pre-emption and homestead transactions were made at a government land office. Ordinarily the immigrant would choose his piece of land from

the map at the land office, and then move on to it. But sometimes he risked settling on the land first without filing any claim. This was called "squatting."

In the struggle for the best farmlands and building sites one squatter would sometimes drive out another, or take possession while the first man was away. This was called "claim jumping" and sometimes it led to bitter fights.

The Immigrants to Le Sueur County

Who were our immigrant settlers, where did they come from, and why did they come? The full answer to these questions would require a very long story. They were of many nationalities and of many walks in life. Le Sueur County records tell of settlers with trades as different as those of shopkeeper, whaler, gunsmith, clergymen, dressmaker, and miner, although most came intending to make their living from the land.

Of the nationalities represented in Le Sueur County, after the many Yankees from eastern United States, the German, Bohemian (or Slav), and British formed the majority.

German Immigration

In the 1850's there was a steady flow of ~~i~~emigration from Germany to America. Small farmers, tradesmen, and day laborers all flocked to America in the hope of improving their living conditions, for they had heard of the cheap lands and the other opportunities which America offered. Many found their way to Le Sueur County.

Bohemian Immigration

The Bohemians, from a province of Czechoslavakia, also helped to settle our county.

After many years of German or Austrian rule the Bohemians still longed

for their freedom, and in 1848 they joined other Slavic peoples, and rose in rebellion. When the Pan-Slavic revolt was crushed by Austrian troops, many fled to America. Bohemians came to our country also for religious freedom, and to find a better living for themselves and their children.

Other Immigrants

In general, this desire to improve living conditions was the strongest reason for immigration. This was true also of the British and the Scandinavians, of whom there are not so many in Le Sueur County. The Irish who came, left their country because of political trouble at home. And among these newly arrived peoples some were looking more for adventure than anything else. The number of Swedish settlers--so large throughout Minnesota and in nearby Nicollet County--in our county was relatively small. Today the greatest number live in Kasota and in the city of Le Sueur.

Today restriction laws have reduced foreign immigration to the United States, to a very small number. A new generation of native-born is growing up, and in Le Sueur County today only about 8 percent of the population is foreign-born. This is the ninth lowest average in the State.

Conditions of Immigration and the Spirit of the Immigrant

Many foreign-born families left their homes with almost no money. After their arrival some were exploited and duped because they could not speak or understand our language. Before they reached Minnesota many had lost almost all of what they had brought, and had to face building a new life with almost nothing at all.

Until the sixties the railroads ended at the Mississippi River. From there the immigrants came up to Minnesota by steamboat. Then they set off inland by prairie schooners--large wagons with covered, tent-like tops that

over the hard dangerous inland trails could cover from ten to fifteen miles a day.

There has never been recorded in history, a movement of people as great as the emigration from Europe to America. Many of the men and women who left their native land for the new world were noncomformists, in other words people who were not content with things and ways of thought as they were. Such men and women, coming to America--some of them to Minnesota and to Le Sueur County--helped create here a new nation, whose aims and hopes were set on building a democracy such as the world had never seen before.

Natural Setting

The best and richest lands in the west naturally drew the most people, and many were attracted to Le Sueur County.

The chief resources of this region were timber, rich soil, building stones, and brick clay. The immigrants were first of all seeking good farm land, and the land of Le Sueur County was rich and fertile, though nearly all of the county was at that time covered with dense forests. The earliest settlers did not believe the great western prairies suited to farming, and preferred to clear their fields from the timber lands.

The Big Woods

The heavy forests that covered this region were known as the "Big Woods." These woods were a southern extension of the great wooded region that began in Canada, and here the forest was about 100 miles long, north and south, and 40 to 50 miles wide. The trees were not evergreen, as they were in Canada and northern Minnesota, but were mostly deciduous. Le Sueur County lay in the southeastern part of the Big Woods.

The largest and most common trees were the basswood and white elm. There were also sugar maple, soft maple, black and white ash, red elm, ironwood, yellow birch, paper or canoe birch, poplar or aspen, cottonwood, and

rarely, the red cedar. Of the smaller trees, the woods had wild plum, wild red and black cherry, American crab apple, juneberry, prickly ash, and the various willows.

The most common shrubs in this forest were sumac, frost grape, virginia creeper, climbing bittersweet, red and black raspberries, wild rose, gooseberries, black currant, cornel, wolfberry, honeysuckle, elder, sweet viburnum, high-bush cranberry, and hazelnut. Wild fruits of many kinds were abundant. The wild strawberries were sometimes as big as small cultivated berries, and the early settlers gathered many gallons of them.

Lakes and Rivers

Settlers were always attracted to the natural beauty of Le Sueur County. Its sixty gleaming lakes, and ~~its~~ streams, were in earlier days all well stocked with fish. The county's largest lake is Jefferson; and Lakes Washington, Tetonka, and German all have over one thousand acres of water surface.

Three-fourths of the county is drained by the Minnesota River, and the remainder by the Cannon River toward the east. The principle tributaries of the Minnesota River in our county are: Chankaska Creek, Cherry Creek, and Le Sueur River.

Land Surface

Only along the Minnesota Valley were there any true prairies in our county. Bordering the river are bluffs, partly covered with scrub oaks. The bottom lands, about 200 to 225 feet below the general level of the county, vary in width. One of the widest stretches along the entire river is in Le Sueur County, just northeast of St. Peter, where the rich bottom lands are about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles wide.

In the Minnesota bottoms are ~~to be~~ found some of the most fertile farm lands in Minnesota. The soil of these lowlands is fine and silt-like and often flooded in the spring of the year. This rich bottom land soil

may be ten feet deep.

The county's general surface soil has a depth of about two feet. It is a black clay loam--the color due to vegetable decay--with a little sand and gravel. Below the surface soil is ten to twenty feet of a yellowish, gravelly clay, and below that a darker, ~~and~~ bluish clay to a great depth.

All of these various layers of soil, to a depth of 150 feet or more, are a part of the "drift sheet" or "glacial till," the name given to the masses of soil and rock that were pushed along and crushed by the ancient glaciers that once covered most of Minnesota. Through these glacial deposits the Minnesota River, probably once much larger than it is now, cut a channel and exposed the still more ancient bed rock.

The terraces of bed rock exposed near Ottawa and Kasota have been since history began a noticeable feature of the landscape, and today they are the basis of an important industry. The exposed rock, ~~are~~ known as Jordan sandstone and Shakopee limestone, were named for the places in Scott County where they were first studied.

The buff-colored limestone layers, now worn down in most places to a thickness of ~~only~~ from 10 to 25 feet are uppermost. Below is a somewhat softer, white or gray sandstone. Both have been found to be excellent for building purposes. In hollows and crevices of the limestone is often found a white clay that is ideal for making bricks.

About four miles back from the river the bluffs and terraces give way to the upland, the region that was once covered by the Big Woods, and whose top soil was made by the decayed leaves and tree trunks of ancient forests. The highest parts of Le Sueur County are in the southeast. Here many centuries ago a glacier melted and left behind a mass of piled up ridges, called terminal moraines. These low hills extend from Waterville and Elysian northwesterly by Lake Jefferson and Lake Emily toward the Minnesota Valley.

Their average height is only about 50 to 75 feet above the surrounding area, or about 1,100 feet above sea level. The most prominent lie south of Lake Sakata, east of Waterville.

Wild Game

Fur-bearing animals, fowl, and wild game of all kind were plentiful in the days of our grandparents. An abundance of game was a boom to the early settlers, who relied on hunting and fishing for a large part of their food supply. Wild passenger pigeons gathered in such enormous flocks in those days that they literally hid the sun.

The Big Woods farmers also added to their incomes during the winter months by trapping for furs. There were mink, weasels, skunks, deer, foxes, racoons, and muskrats in the region.

Minnesota Weather

For a while people in the East seemed to regard our State as a region of snow and perpetual cold. The settlers were anxious to prove that Minnesota was not a polar region, so books and newspapers of that day carried many discussions of weather, and Minnesota was praised as a health resort, even as life-restoring to invalids, curative to the sick, tonic to the adventurous. Indeed Minnesota climate was promoted as if it were a sort of patent medicine. All of this helped to increase early immigration.

CHAPTER IV. EARLY SETTLEMENT ERA

Expanding Settlement:

Early Trails and Roads

As settlement began to spread into the back country away from the river, the settlers had either to follow the few old trails or blaze their own. In the early '50's there were few roads; the old Indian trails were the best routes of inland travel.

A few of these trails had been used by fur traders, and later by Red River carts, on their way with rich loads of furs from the Red River Valley to Mendota. These clumsy, two-wheeled oxcarts were the first important means of overland transportation in Minnesota. Their drivers were usually buckskin clad, halfbreed "bois brules," so-called from the "burnt wood" color of their skin.

These Indian trails and trader's wagon routes often became the first surveyed roads; some of them have even become our modern highways. Important early trails through Le Sueur County included the one along the east side of the Minnesota River from Mendota, and one through the county east to west from Traverse des Sioux at St. Peter to Red Wing.

The first road authorized through Le Sueur County was the old Dodd Road, sometimes called the Mendota-Big Sioux Road, which was authorized in 1852 and surveyed in 1853, though the first section was not opened until 1855. It went from Mendota to the Little Cannon River, westward across to St. Peter, upstream to Mankato, and then southwestward toward the Big Sioux River.

In 1852 several settlers of the lower Mississippi laid out a road from Winona to Mankato. This road went westward near or through the sites of Rochester, Owatonna, and then northwestward through Le Sueur County, to connect with the Dodd Road just east of Kasota.

The next important road to pass through Le Sueur County was ~~a road~~ from Red Wing to Fort Ridgely. By 1860 the county was fairly well criss-crossed with wagon trails.

Passable roads often determined the success or failure of townsites. The settlers in their travels followed the lines of least resistance, going around the lakes, swamps, thickets, and gullies. "Corduroy" roads of logs were laid across the muddiest places. Improved and surveyed roads came slowly.

Early vehicles were as crude as the roads they traveled. Wagon wheels

were cut from solid blocks of wood, hewn out of logs. Sleigh runners were made of small, bent trees. The first factory-made wagon or buggy caused great excitement. As late as 35 years ago there was little general traveling, except by salesmen, stock buyers, or mail carriers.

Settlement Advances

As the fame of the Minnesota Valley spread, and more and more immigrants were attracted to this region, the home-seekers pushed farther and farther inland, until each of the 15 townships of Le Sueur County had its settlers.

Le Sueur County Townships

Ordinarily a township contains 36 square miles. River borders have made this impractical in some cases, so Le Sueur County has several undersized townships along the Minnesota River. Le Sueur, in the northwest corner of the county, is the smallest township. The others are Tyrone, Derrynane, ~~and~~ Lanesburg, Ottawa, Sharon, Lexington, ~~and~~ Montgomery, Kasota, Cleveland, Cordova, ~~and~~ Kilkenny, Washington, Elysian, and Waterville.

Ottawa

After Kasota and Le Sueur, the next settled section of our county was at Ottawa. The first settler near here was Antoine Young, a Frenchman, who built a grist mill on Cherry Creek in 1853. His mill is sometimes referred to as the first in Le Sueur County, but this claim is generally discredited in favor of the mill at Kasota. Antoine Young moved to Yellow Medicine in 1860, and was the first man shot in the Indian outbreak that occurred two years later.

Crawford and Jones in 1853 surveyed and platted the townsite, calling it "Minnewashta," meaning "Good water," because of the many springs in the vicinity. In 1856 the town was resurveyed and called Ottawa, for a tribe of

lc/ital

Indians closely related to the Chippewa. Tim Fuller and Robert and William Winegar were the first settlers, after Young, in this section of the county.

For a time Ottawa hoped to become "a leading place," and it was at least a lively one as late as the '80's. Its quarries were very busy; the building stone mined there was known as "Ottawa Rock." Brick making was the main industry, and the town was also a popular wood market, even although there was more prairie in Ottawa Township than in any other Le Sueur County township. Ottawa had a good two-story stone house at a time when many villages had only a one-room frame building.

Montgomery

In order of population, after the city of Le Sueur (population 1,897 in 1930), the largest towns in our county are Montgomery (pop. 1,570), New Prague (1,543), Waterville (1,419), and Le Center (948).

Montgomery Township was first settled in 1856 by August Richter, G. Augst, and others, and Richter established a general store not far from the present city of Montgomery in 1859. But the townsite remained a dense forest, and was not even platted until 1877, when the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad came through.

Again Richter opened the first store on the new site. T. W. Sheehy & Co. followed immediately with another general store, a furniture store was opened by Frank Havlicek, and a hardware store by L. Schrauth. The next year Joseph Chadderdon established the "Montgomery Standard," an independent weekly newspaper.

The milling industry early became important in Montgomery. Starting from a small beginning in 1884-85, the grist mill prospered and became eventually the James Quirk Milling Co. A boiler explosion in 1896 was called a "major disaster" in Montgomery, but business improved steadily in successive years. In 1911 the industry was taken over by the Commander Milling Company

of Minneapolis. The capacity then was about 1,000 barrels per day.

When the mills in other small towns were being gradually discontinued due to centralized Twin City milling, the Montgomery mills were still going strong. The war-time capacity was about 3,000 barrels a day, with an elevator capacity of 600,000 bushels.

The Montgomery flour mills were at one time the "pride of southern Minnesota," and in 1916 were said to be "equal to any flouring mill plant in the State." Today flour milling is still important in this town. The 1929 capacity was 3,500 barrels, with 125 employees working on a 24-hours a day schedule, drawing an annual payroll of $222,000.

Among the first regulations passed by the village officers of Montgomery was an ordinance dealing with traveling shows. It may seem strange that such rules should be necessary in a newly-founded Big Woods settlement, but in those days no backwoods village was too remote for barnstorming troopers. All "caravans, circuses, concerts for pay, or theatrical performances" were required to procure a license. The fee was $1 to $15 at the discretion of the council.

Also among the first official acts was a notice to ban hogs from wandering at large on Main Street. One early local law decreed that no person should run, or drive any vehicle faster than six miles per hour on the streets. Another ordinance prohibited the discharge of firearms on Sunday, and still another provided a $75 license fee for saloons or anyone selling spirits.

The village fathers of Montgomery, it seems, were an ambitious lot. At an early date the Montgomery Board of Trade was formed, and one of the first things they did was to advertise in widely circulated magazines, "Wanted, Capitalists," to build a sugar-beet factory. Several inquiries were received, but apparently capitalists were shy.

Among the early settlers around Montgomery were many Bohemians. In recent years the city has held an annual "Kolacky Day" celebration, when thousands of "Kolacky" Bohemian buns made with dry fruit and spice fillings are served to visitors. The fame of Kolacky Day has brought Montgomery into greater prominence, and today it is sometimes spoken of as "the biggest little city in southern Minnesota."

New Prague

The city of New Prague lies both in Scott and Le Sueur County; Main Street is the dividing line. Its business, likewise, is about equally divided between the two counties. The official name of the early village post office was first Orel, then Praha, Czech for Prague, their own capital; then Nova Praha, and finally New Prague.

The first settler was Anton Philipp, a native of Bavaria, who was directed up the Minnesota River by Bishop Cretin of St. Paul. Later in that same year (1856), a group of ~~about~~ four Bohemians also came to Bishop Cretin for advice. He directed them toward St. Cloud up the Mississippi Valley, but they lost their way, and, ~~when they~~ arriving at the site of New Prague, decided to stay there.

Early Bohemian settlers were Vrtis, Borak, Hanzel, Stepka, and Bruzek. Other Germans and Bohemians followed their countrymen up the Minnesota, and still others came up from Iowa. Without waiting to survey the townsite, Philipp began selling lots, and the location was rapidly settled.

The St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church organized in 1856 became the center of community life. The first building was of logs. When this burned, a brick church was built in 1863. The first school was conducted in Anton Philipp's log cabin, taught by Mary Chalupsky. The first postmaster walked 24 miles to Shakopee once a week for the mail.

A first, or at least an early store, was owned by Michael Simmer,

followed closely by the Vrtis store. Two short-lived brick yards made huge bricks about 18 inches long, 8 inches wide, and 4 inches thick. When in 1877 the railroad reached New Prague, and the village grew more rapidly. It was incorporated as a city in 1891, with a population of about 1200.

In early settlement times New Prague was heavily timbered, and along the street for some years stood the stumps of large trees. A small creek poured its overflow waters into a lower part of the street, and planks were laid across the wet and muddy places.

Stores and houses were built high above the ground--requiring five or six steps--to escape floods. Branches and straw were strewn on Main Street to help the teams through the mud. Even then, ox teams often became bogged. Such streets were typical of many early Minnesota villages before the era of pavements and concrete.

Due to its Bohemian heritage, New Prague from its beginnings has been far more interested in music than has most mid western communities. The Smisek brass band, and the Komaret band were local favorites, and the farmers' band organized by John Sery, a composer of high order, was known far beyond the limits of the county. A town in whose music, dancing, and drama nearly everyone shared, New Prague attracted from far and near settlers old and young who were hungry to mix a little fun with their daily diet of hard work.

For in spite of music and dancing, conditions were often so desperate that some of the newcomers would gladly have gone back to their homelands, if they had had the money to get them there.

Like Montgomery, New Prague is today an important flour milling city. New Prague's first mill was built by Thomas Suchomel and James Bisek in 1875, and taken over by Michael Simmer in 1882. In 1896, when the mill had attained a daily capacity of 250 barrels, Mr. F. A. Bean came into the mill.

Mr. Bean had begun milling in 1870, at Faribault. He established addi-

tional plants at Morristown and Northfield, and made what was a fortune for those days. But competition from the Twin Cities grew harder and harder to meet. His business began to fail. By the time he was fifty he had lost everything and his debts amounted to $100,000. In 1896 he came to New Prague and took over the mill. But the plant was sold by court order, then his townsmen raised $30,000 for a new mill. This time Mr. Bean decided to depend on the local market, and by careful management he built up the business until it expanded to a chain of mills, which was then organized as the International Milling Company. With plants in Canada, Iowa, and New York, as well as Minnesota, his flour had a wide market. By 1912, he had begun to pay back his old debts. These were long since outlawed and not legally collectible, but he not only paid every dollar but every cent of accumulated interest as well.

Today the International Milling Company is still an important concern, and New Prague flour is still shipped to all parts of the world.

Waterville

Not much has been recorded of the early history of Waterville, but we know that the city dates from 1856, when it was platted as a village. The first townsmen arrived in 1856-57. Among them were A. Tidball and L. Z. Rogers. Tidball built the first frame building on the present townsite, and both men opened general stores soon after their arrival. An early hotel was built by Jacob Dawald.

The name Waterville was chosen because of its two attractive lakes, Tetonka and Sakata. Nearly a dozen other states have villages or townships of the same name.

It is said that during the Indian war of 1862 Waterville was one of the few towns that did not fear attack, and put out no guards. An old history

of the Minnesota Valley, written in 1882, adds that "She, however, claims the honor of having taken the last Sioux scalp, for which a liberal bounty was received."

Waterville claims as perhaps its most distinguished son, R. W. Jacklin, who came to the town in 1870. Jacklin was a brevet major in command of a battalion of sharp shooters during the Civil War, and it was he who received the flag of truce preceding the surrender of General Lee's army by order of General U. S. Grant.

Le Center and The County Seat Fights

Originally called Le Sueur Center, the county seat of Le Sueur County was renamed Le Center only within recent years. The site was chosen in 1876 and cut out of the forest expressly for the county seat, because it is in almost the exact center of the county. This ended a series of county seat quarrels that had been waging since the county was organized in 1853.

In pioneer days it was the ambition of every town to get itself elected the county seat, not only because of the honor, but because business thrived and real estate values rose where this happened. The city of Le Sueur was the first county seat. But Le Sueur was not centrally situated and, with scarcely any roads, was hard to get to. So other towns soon began trying to have the offices moved. In 1858 Cleveland, a thriving village founded the year before, attempted to have them moved there. But although Cleveland more than once received a majority of the votes, each time Le Sueur found a way of having the vote legally overruled.

In 1859 the village of Lexington entered the fight. The struggle for the offices now became so intense it was carried to court, but again Le Sueur won.

Next a group of about 100 outraged men from Cleveland armed and marched to Le Sueur, determined to take the county records and properties by force. But

the Le Sueur townsmen had been warned and they hid the documents in a store with armed men to defend them.

The citizens of Cleveland could find nothing but a few maps, a very few of the county papers, and an old desk. Retreating toward their hometown, they were met by a party of Le Sueur patriots trooping along to tin-pan accompaniment. This was long spoken of by the old settlers as the "Rogue's March."

The next winter, however (1860), Cleveland was permitted to entertain the county officials for one session, but with this exception Le Sueur remained the county seat until 1875. That year another vote resulted in favor of Cleveland, and this time a Supreme Court decision upheld the election and the county capital was removed to Cleveland. But only for a year.

So much dissatisfaction was expressed by the county in general that the seat of government was agin moved, this time to Le Sueur Center.

Michael Doran, a political leader, who took part in the third nomination of Grover Cleveland for president, headed this new move. He circulated a petition to have the county seat moved to Union Center. But, when he had gotten a majority to sign it, the site proved to be a section of land in the heart of uncut swamp-surrounded timber, owned by Doran himself; it was too late to do anything about it although a few citizens tried to.

Doran now formed a townsite company, with George M. Tousely as president. They platted the new village and put up a two-story brick court house, which was first leased by the county for ten years and then purchased and taken over. That is how Le Center, one of the youngest Le Sueur County towns, became our county seat.

Rural Townships

Derrynane and Kilkenny Townships were both named for places in Ireland. Derrynane with no important villages is nevertheless a prosperous farming region. The word Derrynane is old Gaelic and means "oak and ivy." A great

many Germans followed into this region but western Derrynane Township is still an Irish stronghold.

Sharon township, at first called "Young Town," is another prosperous agricultural region of Le Sueur County although without a railroad or an important village. This section along the fertile Minnesota Valley, was named Sharon, supposedly by one of the Welsh settlers, for the plain in Palestine, that "flowed with milk and honey." Another devout Welshman called it the Promised Land.

Philip Dressel, who came here in 1856 had been a printer in St. Paul on the "Staats Zeitung," the first German paper in the State. He was postmaster of the little village of Dresselville, now not even on any map.

Tyrone Township is another name of Irish origin, while Heidelberg was named in honor of the German university city. Elysian is a word that traces its origin back to the Greeks, and Cordova bears the name of an ancient Moorish city in Spain. Kasota is a Dakotah Indian name meaning "clear, or cleared off," and referred to the prairie plateau south of the town.

So our place-names suggest the many nationalities and influences that went into the making of our county. Bohemian, German, Irish, French, Spanish, ancient Greek, Indian, and Yankee, all unite into the melting pot to come out thoroughly American.

Like Dresselville, a few other villages of the county lived only a short period and then vanished from the map. Among them are Chehaliso, Caroline, Anawauk, and Okaman.

In pioneer days many townsites were made or doomed by the railroad's choice of routes. Speculators, confident that they could guess where the tracks were to be laid, platted towns and sold lots only to find how unreliable had been their "trips" or their "hunches."

Many a new town was thus deserted almost as swiftly as it had grown--leaving only the open fields and the trees, with perhaps a deserted shanty or two as monuments of mistaken zeal.

CHAPTER V. HARDSHIPS OF PIONEER LIFE

We know that frontier life was not easy. The settlers endured hardships and trials in the founding of our county and our State, that make us marvel today at their courage and physical strength.

The first thing the new homeseeker had to learn, was how to build a log cabin. When he reached his wilderness claim, he had to have shelter for himself and family.

In the Big Woods cabins were built of notched logs, chinked with sod, clay, or mud. Usually these were only one room, about 12 by 20 square feet, and about 8 feet high, roofed with brush and sod piled on poles. Sometimes the roof was made of basswood bark, cut from small trees and slit lengthwise in half, the edge of one piece resting in the hollow of another.

The floor was of either dirt or split logs. The door was made of split poles pegged to cross bars, opening inward on leather hinges. A piece of cloth was often the only window covering. The fireplace, where all the cooking was done, was made of logs smeared with clay. A low loft under the roof was often the children's bedroom.

Furniture was usually home-made, though a cabin might contain a factory-made bed, and table brought from a faraway home. Tables and stools were ordinarily made of split logs. Beds were of poles with ropes for springs and straw or feather tick mattresses.

The commonest lamp was a tin cup partly filled with grease or sperm oil. A burning rag that reached down into the oil gave a dim, smoky light. When deer were killed, the tallow was saved for home-made candles, which gave a

slightly better light.

Many old settlers recall that they were never really warm those first winters. Wind whistled through chinks in the cabins, and the small wood-burning stoves were not able to combat the cold. For supplies settlers usually either walked long miles, or traveled by the slow ox team--scarcely easier where beasts and wagons had to work their way through deep snow or sticky mud. Newcomers not used to cold climates, found the winters a special hardship. All suffered during the famous three day blizzard of 1873, that swept across Minnesota's southern and western counties and took the lives of scores of settlers.

In dry summers there was the constant fear of prairie fires. At one time the settlers of Elysian Township saw with terror a prairie fire approaching from the southwest. Fortunately a chain of lakes stretched nearly across the township. All joined in plowing ditches, and burning over strips of land between the lakes. The fire was halted at the lakes, but a few settlers on the south shores lost their homes, stock, and hay supplies, and barely saved themselves.

The first crops were raised between stumps in tiny clearings. Later the stumps were grubbed out, and gradually fields as we know them today came to be cultivated. At first all the work was done by hand. There was no labor-saving machinery of any kind. Indeed some of the first immigrants did not have even the tools with which to work by hand. Somehow they got hold of axes and grub hoes, and as soon as they could, they bought a yoke of oxen. The children learned to help at an early age, and often boys of ten and twelve did the work of a grown man.

Farming in the early days was not much like what it is today. Both methods and tools were primitive. Plowing was done with crude home-made plows drawn by oxen.

Grain was sowed by hand, harvested with a cradle, threshed with a flail. The seed was carried in a canvas-lined basket fastened over the shoulders. Experienced sowers used both hands, sorting the seed in wide graceful sweeps. Good sowers often hired out for as much as $1 a day, which was very good money in those days.

In winter men and boys went into the Big Woods to cut timber--cord-wood for fuel, lumber for building purposes, and, after the railroads came, for railway ties.

Most of the early settlers did some "working in the woods." Men became experts with ax and saw, and ~~a~~re putation for strength and skill in felling, splitting, and trimming trees or rolling and piling logs, was the ambition of pioneer boys, who practiced for it as eagerly as they do now to get on the football team.

Other Big Woods farmers turned trappers in winter to earn a little money, for cash in those days was exceedingly scarce, but some was necessary to "prove up" on claims, and for implements, oxen, taxes, and other needs.

Another way some earned a little money was by digging ginseng roots. lc This herb grew in many parts of Le Sueur County, and settlers could sell all they ~~could find~~ found. Entire families made a business of gathering the root which was exported to China, where it ~~was~~ is used as a medicine.

Stores were many miles distant and for food supplies settlers had to depend on what they could raise, supplemented by wild game and wild fruits.

Wild ducks settled upon the lakes in huge flocks--sometimes so many that their flight sounded "louder than a train of cars." The passenger pigeons, now completely extinct, were killed by the hundreds and the breast ~~meat~~ meat dried for winter. Every pioneer boy knew how to hunt, but ammunition was expensive, and when he went after prairie chicken, quail, and pigeons, he often loaded his gun with dried peas.

Wild plums and other fruits, hazelnuts and wild honey were important

additions to the settlers' larder. By 1854 stores were established at a few points of Le Sueur County, and it was not long after that before they were fairly common. The first stores, like the first cabins, were crudely built and only bare necessities were stocked in them. The common store foods were oatmeal and cornmeal; sugar, salt, coffee, tea, one or two canned fruits, and sardines. For these the settlers traded butter and eggs, and sometimes potatoes.

Fancy groceries, and the many varieties of canned goods we now know, have become common only within the last 25 years.

Hardware stores in those days handled pitch forks, carpenter tools, nails, tinware, and building materials. Besides these, the hardware store owner often sold tubs, kettles, pails, etc., made in his own tinsmith shop.

Clothing stores came in much later, though often a little clothing could ~~usually~~ be bought at the general store. The pioneer mother usually made the clothing for the entire family. Style was not very important. The home-made clothing of those days was planned mostly for warmth and protection. Most of the women and girls wore woolen stockings knit at home, perhaps cotton or lisle in the summer. The country boys wore heavily lined pants, and as it got colder they added more shirts. Overcoats were almost unknown. Everybody wore boots in cold weather, but in summer it was common to go barefoot. Yet even in those early days, color and fashion were not entirely disregarded in the towns. Many of the immigrants came from cultured homes. A few young women came from the East with trunks full of pretty dresses, and wore them in the backwoods, too, as though they were on the streets of New York. A ballroom in Kasota was a popular gathering place for such elite ladies; ~~and~~ Mr. Butnam's store at Kasota was said to carry as fine a line of silks and woolen fabrics as could be purchased almost anywhere.

As so much time and energy had to be devoted to obtaining food, shelter, and clothing, little attention was paid at first to hygiene living.

An old book published in 1871 has this to say of the Minnesota Valley: "While it is most attractive in scenery and most fertile in crops, it is not quite as desirable for the invalid. Though Shakopee, Le Sueur, St. Peter's, and Madelia are not very objectionable in a sanitary point of view."

Pioneer homes were small, and often very crowded, as families of 11 or 12 children were not uncommon. Moreover, as the rush of immigrants began, often the cabin was shared with latest comers while lands were being selected and homes erected. Hospitals and modern medical science were still in the future. Doctors were often ill trained and always few in number. Much suffering ~~therefore~~ was due to the lack of proper medical care.

The country doctor of those days was an important and ~~almost~~ sometimes heroic figure, who was almost invariably ready to make long trips on foot, by ox team, or horse, ~~back anywhere,~~ through any kind of weather. When there were no doctors, laymen and "healers" were ~~often~~ consulted in illness. Often methods used were not very different from those of the Indian herb doctors. It was well that the pioneers were for the most part of vigorous stock, who se busy but simple, healthful lives, left little time to worry about their illnesses.

One of the first doctors in our county was ~~Dr.~~ Otis Ayer of Le Sueur. Dr. Ayer was born in New Hampshire, and educated in the East. He came to Minnesota in 1856, and during the Civil War was surgeon for the Second Minnesota Infantry. After the Sioux uprising of 1862, he went out to care for the wounded, with a gun in one hand and a medicine kit in the other.

Dr. W. H. Woods, who lived for a time at Le Sueur and later practiced in Montgomery, was the physician who attended the Younger brothers, members of the notorious Jesse James gang, after their capture near Madelia in 1877. He kept as relics six teeth from the mouth of James Younger and the clothing of Charles Pitts, who was killed in the capture.

But the outstanding medical man in our county was Dr. William W. Mayo,

father of the famous Mayo brothers, Dr. William J. and Dr. Charles Mayo. Dr. Mayo, Sr. was born in Ireland, and studied chemistry in England under John Dalton, the English scientist who was famous for his discoveries in different gases. Dalton advised Mayo to become a doctor, and the young man decided to follow his advice.

In 1845 he immigrated to America and studied medicine. In 1854 he came up to Minnesota on a river boat, and on the way helped combat a siege of cholera that broke out on the boat. After a short stay at St. Paul, he set out to walk to Duluth with a pack on his back. Duluth was then wild country with very few cabins; nevertheless the young doctor went back and brought his wife, and they lived there for a while.

In 1856 Dr. Mayo left the northern part of the State and traveled the beautiful Minnesota River to the town of Le Sueur. At first he tried his hand at farming; but in 1857 or 1858 he moved into Le Sueur, and in 1858 built himself a home there.

During the Indian uprising Dr. Mayo went to New Ulm to help care for the wounded. At this time he got possession of the body of Cut Nose, a Sioux Indian known as a savage killer. Dr. Mayo wired these bones and made a skeleton that was used for medical study by his sons, soon to become doctors in their own right. In 1863 the family moved to Rochester, Minnesota, and there father and sons eventually developed the Mayo Clinic, now known around the world.

In 1932 the Mayo brothers presented the old family home to the town of Le Sueur to be used as a library, and a historical marker was placed there by the Minnesota State Historical Society.

Clothing, shelter, and care in bodily ills were not the only concerns of the pioneers. They were no less eager for education, religion, and social life.

As soon as a group was settled in their new homes they looked for a

place to worship. If nothing else could be managed, a log house was put together. The settlers had little money, but they could give labor and timber for their church. Later, in the '70's or '80's, larger and better churches were built, and these have proved most lasting of all the buildings from pioneer days.

Before the churches could be built, services were held in the settlers' cabins, in stores, or almost any available place. In Kilkenny Township the first meeting was held in the forest--"God's first temple." Traveling clergymen journeyed hundreds of miles every month to preach the gospel. Services conducted by Father Somereisen of Mankato in the home of Patrick Cantwell in 1854 were among the first, if not the first in the country.

Reverend C. C. Kidder, of the Methodist Episcopal faith from Red Wing, Reverend John Scnell, a German Methodist mission minister from St. Paul, and the Benedictine fathers of the Catholic missions were also early visitors in Le Sueur County. The Methodists in Le Sueur and Lexington and the Catholics in New Prague were among the first denominations to organize church units--all in 1856. The first Lutheran church is thought to have been a log structure built in Lanesburg Township about the same year.

Among the religious groups in Le Sueur County two or three Welsh organizations. The first Welsh settlers started west from St. Paul in 1853 with three wagons drawn by four yoke of oxen. Many more came in 1856. Their first church services were held in the Big Woods cabin of Edward Evans, in Sharon township in 1856. A church was organized the same year by Reverend John Roberts, and a log church built in the spring of '57 was used until the '80's. The Welsh church was Calvinist Methodist in those days.

Some of the Welsh farmers southeast of Le Sueur have lived on the same farm and attended the same church and Sunday school for more than seventy years. For years, until the railroads came, Welsh ministers used to

walk nearly 30 miles from the settlements near Mankato, to hold a service in the Big Woods.

By 1881 there were about 40 churches in our county, representing over a dozen denominations. By 1915 there were about 50. Today, due to various unions of sects there are probably not more than 37 churches. Of these Catholic and Lutheran predominate, over one-third being Catholic.

Schools and Education

Another concern of the settlers was the problem of schooling. Though education was at that time considered a rare privilege rather than the right of all men, the pioneers were anxious to give their children at least the rudiments of learning.

The first schools, like the first church services, were often held in private cabins, stores, or town halls. The first known school in Le Sueur County was organized in 1856. In the winter of 1857 a school was opened in a private home at Lexington. About 20 students attended, taught by S. J. Baldwin. That same year a private school was organized by Miss Prude Bacon, whose classes met in a small log cabin just back of the townsite of Ottawa.

The first school in Le Sueur was taught by Silas Myrick in the winter of 1857. Classes were held in a small frame house built the previous fall. In 1857 classes were also held in a small log building in Elysian Township, and Waterville built a small frame school, where a Miss Davidson taught about 13 pupils. In Kilkenny Township 15 students were taught in a log house school, beginning in 1858.

In Kasota the first known school was taught by Elizabeth Hunt, in 1858. This, too, was in a private home. In the same year Cleveland held school in the town hall, with about 50 pupils attending. The first school in Cordova Township was opened in a log building, once intended for a store. Miss Kate Hess was the teacher and had only seven pupils.

The first school in New Prague, as we have seen, was conducted in the log cabin of Anton Philipp and taught by Mary Chalupsky. The first public school, built here in 1865, was thus described by an old timer. "The chinks between the logs were daubed with plaster; there were two tiny windows and one home-made door. It looked more like a barn than a school to me....."

The early schools usually had home-made, straight-backed benches. The ventilation was ~~usually~~ bad. In winter the room was often bitterly cold, and students and teacher sat close around the stove. Pupils trudged many miles to school, carrying their lunch in dinner pails.

The school term was ~~usually~~ about three to six months, and teachers were very hard to get. Usually they boarded around in the families of their pupils.

Following these, other schools were started throughout the county, and gradually log cabin schools gave way to neat frame, and later to fine brick, schoolhouses.

Toward the end of the century academies became numerous. An academy was a privately managed higher school, which charged a tuition fee. It supplemented grade school education, and sometimes gave very good courses in music and some of the arts. To be an academy graduate in those days carried high social standing. But on the whole the children of the early settlers had very little formal education. Much schooling was not considered necessary for a girl, and a boy was expected to go to work very early. At about 12 years of age boys were often "bound out" or apprenticed to learn a trade or business from experience, while many remained on the land helping their fathers until they, too, had a farm of their own.

Early Journalism

As the Minnesota Valley became a settled community, more and more was felt the need for a newspaper. At first the settlers heard only such news as was passed from one neighbor to another. Without regular mail, telegraph, or radio even after the first newspapers were organized it often was weeks before they learned the state and national news.

Some sources say that the first newspaper in our county was published at Le Sueur in 1865. But records of the Minnesota Historical Society show that this honor must go to the village of Cleveland, where Thomas M. Perry established the Cleveland Leader in 1858.

Before coming to Cleveland, Mr. Perry was in the publishing business at St. Peter. From July, 1858, to sometime in 1860 he published the Leader, then returned to St. Peter to print the Little Giant. But he came back to Cleveland, and established the Cleveland Herald. After a few months he sold the equipment to Monroe Edwards, who took the presses to lower Le Sueur and started the Le Sueur County Gazette, which he ran until he was killed in the Indian rebellion of 1862.

James J. Green was another Minnesota journalist who came across the river to Le Sueur County from St. Peter where he had published the Minnesota Statesman. In 1865 he moved his paper to Le Sueur, where it was destroyed by fire. His is also sometimes claimed to be the first paper in Le Sueur County.

A year later M. R. Prendergast and Felton Vollmer founded the Le Sueur Courier. In 1866 this was the only newspaper in our county. As stores in our territory at that time were small and scattered, the St. Paul merchants advertised in the Courier columns as much as did the Le Sueur stores. The editors of the Courier used to complain that the high water often held up circulation, when the stages could not ford the river for several days at a time.

After his venture at Le Sueur, James J. Green edited journals at Winona, at St. Cloud, and at Minneapolis. In 1873 he returned to his old place and founded the Le Sueur Sentinel, an eight-column Democratic weekly. This became one of the most influential and successful papers in southern Minnesota. Its publisher was for many years an important figure. He was once the mayor of Le Sueur. In 1911 the paper he organized was moved to Waterville, and became the Waterville Sentinel.

In the territorial and early settlement period of Minnesota many small weekly papers were founded. Some of them were issued for only a few weeks or months, some for years. The Cleveland Leader, apparently the first paper in our county, was the 78th Minnesota weekly newspaper published.

Most of the early papers of the state devoted considerable space to national and foreign news, and paid little attention to local happenings. Selections from famous authors, wise sayings, and even continued stories and poetry were popular. Editorials were often reprinted from the city dailies. Newspapers in those days were much more informal than today, rival editors fought bitter word battles that more than once led to the use of fists when printed assaults no longer satisfied.

Though the papers of those early years were very different from our great metropolitan dailies, with their telephoto pictures and radioed news, they probably had an even greater influence. They had the development and growth of their community truly at heart, and did much to advance civilization in Minnesota.

Other early agencies of culture and education were the many literary societies, debating clubs, and singing schools of every new settlement. Husking bees, quilting bees, and raising bees brought the settlers together, and gave them a chance to discuss the problems and news of the day. The young people gathered for dancing parties, fancy dress balls, taffy pulls, sleigh rides and spelldowns. By 1857 billiard tables and bowling allies had been

introduced. Traveling troups of players occasionally came through the towns with a show, or a "Panorama."

Panoramas were large paintings on canvas, a sort of forerunner to the movies. Huge rolls of canvas were unrolled before the audience, or displayed in full in a large circle. Usually the paintings portrayed a story or some event in history.

A wedding was the occasion for a jolly celebration, especially among the Irish. Friends and relatives came from miles around for the feasting and dancing. They united, too, to bury the dead, or to minister to the sick.

Both the Irish and the Bohemians who settled here were especially fond of dancing. Settlers often traveled ten to twenty miles to attend a dance.

Unfortunately, among the settlers, as among us, all was not harmony, industry, and good will. In frontier settlements there is likely to be a certain lawlessness. Nearly all the early villages had their saloons, and along with the homesteaders there were always a few drifters and adventure-seekers and rowdy fights were uncommon.

So before long the frontier felt the need of lawyers and judges. Judge A. G. Chatfield, founder of Belle Plaine in Scott County, was the first in this part of Minnesota to practice law or preside over court. He was what was known as a traveling or circuit judge, and held the first courts in nine of Minnesota counties.

In our county the first court was held on September 26, 1853, at Le Sueur, Judge Chatfield officiating. The grand jury sworn in by Chatfield brought its first indictment against one of its own members, Charles Gadwa. He was charged with selling liquor to the Indians.

Perhaps the earliest lawyer to take up his residence in our county was A. W. Bangs, who came to Le Sueur about 1861. In the sixties (about 1864)

also came Francis Cadwell, son of Edward Cadwell, who was with George Washington when he crossed the Delaware.

Another early lawyer was Judson Jones, who came to Le Sueur about the same time as Bangs. The community always thought Jones a bit odd. He fixed the date of his death twenty years in advance, and had a monument put up during his life-time with the dates upon it. However, he lived only half the time he had allotted to himself.

Development of Transportation

River Traffic

One of the most important factors in the development of any new country is transportation. It was because Le Sueur County bordered the Minnesota River, that it was settled before counties farther inland. At first the river was the only means of transportation, and for many years remained the easiest and most important approach to the frontier settlements of the Minnesota Valley.

Passenger and freight traffic on the River had its hey day between 1852 and 1871. By 1858 there were nearly 400 boat arrivals at St. Paul from the Minnesota River. In 1859 one steamer, the Freighter, even tried to pass up the Minnesota into the Red River of the North, but was stranded about ten miles below Big Stone Lake and left there. In years of very high water such a trip might have been possible.

Le Sueur was an important steamboat stop. At this time the merchants of the river towns depended on the steamboats for practically all of their supplies. At the end of the navigation season, or in drought years when larger boats could not get through, prices would rise. Boats succeeded in traveling upstream far beyond Le Sueur County. The "Little Rapids" above Carver were treacherous, and in low water often kept boats from going farther. Then only the smaller boats could pass, and only the most daring of the pilots risked

their vessels. "How are the rapids?" people would ask, all along the river.

In dry seasons barges were used, and these became common about 1863. The first ones were hardly more than simple rafts. But these were soon improved so they could carry the heavy loads of lime, grain, and rock, that were towed up the river by small tug boats. One string of barges hooked together carried 30,000 bushels of wheat. By 1866 there were over 175 barges in use. One was 142 feet long, 25 feet wide, and could carry 114 tons. That year wheat shipments from the Minnesota Valley totaled 688,641 bushels of which 22,000 bushels were shipped from Le Sueur, and 5,000 from Ottawa.

The establishment of the Sioux Indian Agencies, and of Fort Ridgely in 1853 added to steamboat traffic. At the Redwood Agency the Indians would run out shouting, "Nitonka-pata-wata-washta,"--"your big fire canoe is good." In 1856 the steamer Clarion took 150 tons of government supplies from Le Sueur to the agency.

Of the Minnesota River steamers few were built in Minnesota. One, the Albany, was built by Capt. Davidson at Ottawa during the winter of 1860 and sold to Capt. John Webber. The Albany ~~built~~ planned, expressly for low water, was of very light draft, about 42 tons. In 1861 it was the first boat of the year up the river; it left St. Paul March 30 and arrived at Mankato on April 1. Old traders and Indians claimed that the river that spring was higher than since 1821, but by June the water was so low that only the smaller boats could go upstream past the Little Rapids. The Albany made twenty-two trips as far as Mankato that year--more than any other boat.

Steamboating was full of adventure and excitement in those days. It was often necessary to stop for fuel to be cut from the forests; then the passengers would as likely as not go ashore to help. Smokestacks sometimes tangled in over-hanging branches; sand bars, snags, and low water were common hazards. During the Indian scare steamers anchored at night in midstream.

Average progress upstream was about 14 miles a day, although downstream the speed was much better. One of the fastest boats steamed from Mankato to St. Paul in 15 hours.

For the settlers steamboating days were glamorous ones, and the pilots, captains, and mates were greatly admired. Most of the boys ~~of the Valley~~ dreamed of becoming rivermen. When the boat's whistle echoed through the valley, young and old ran to the levees, and farmers left their fields to watch the huge paddle wheel churn proudly by. When the hard winter had ended and the ice had gone thundering out, all awaited excitedly and hailed with joyful cheers the smoke that announced the arrival of the first boat of the season, loaded with supplies and bringing news of the outside world.

In January, 1865, the State Legislature appropriated $3,000 to improve Minnesota River conditions. Capt. John Webber of Ottawa was appointed one of two commissioners to oversee the work. The river was cleared of snags and other improvements made.

After the railroad was built to Mankato in 1868, river traffic began to die down. When in 1871 the Northwestern Road reached New Ulm, navigation on the Minnesota was no longer very important. In the ten years from 1876 to 1886 no steamboat was seen on the river, and in 1897 an excursion boat made a final voyage to Mankato. So steamboating on the Minnesota began and ended with an excursion.

Delivering the Mail--Stage Lines

River mail delivery was neither regular nor certain, and before long horse-drawn stages began to take over the mail service.

The first regular stage mail service was privately owned by J. C. Burbank, and deliveries were made twice a week. This was in the middle fifties; a few isolated routes had operated much earlier. In 1849 there were only four land mail routes in our entire State. Five years later there were 25, and by

1856 the number increased to 49. In the next two years it again doubled, till in 1860 most of southern Minnesota was criss-crossed with stage lines.

In the territory lying between the Mississippi and the Minnesota River, the first stage line was established in January, 1853. This line followed the route of the old Government Road, now roughly US highwy 169. Crossing the Minnesota River by ferry at Bloomington, the stages followed the south side of the river, through Shakopee, down into our county, through Le Sueur, across to St. Peter, and then up to Mankato and Fort Ridgely.

By 1855 a line had been organized from Winona to St. Peter, and the next year another connected Red Wing and St. Peter. Each of these lines was a great boon to the settlers of Le Sueur County.

In the first years of settlement mail contracts between nearby villages were sometimes let to private parties. For example, between Montgomery and Wheatland (a village since disappeared) a blacksmith of Wheatland was granted the contract, and his son and daughter took turns carrying the mail the six miles each way.

Mail was also carried from village to village by horseback. Usually the mail was not heavy, and could be easily handled in such a fashion. Between some of the small villages five or six letters was considered a large delivery, and at that time, of course, there were very few newspapers or magazines.

After the first railroad came through the valley in the late sixties, the stage business dwindled.

The Civil War

The settlers of Le Sueur County were barely well established in their new homes, founded their log churches and schools, and cut a few roads in the Big Woods, when the outbreak of the Civil War brought new problems. Minnesota was the first state to volunteer men for service. Many left almost at once for the southern battlefields, leaving their wives and children to carry on the farms and provide for the families.

Columbus Brock, whose father was one of the first settlers in Kilkenny Township, was the first man from Minnesota to die in the Civil War. A member of the first Minnesota Infantry, he was killed at the Battle of Bull Run.

Hardly had the Civil War gotten well underway when a new fear came to the valley settlements--the threat of an Indian uprising.

In early settlement times the Dakotahs were more or less friendly to the whites, though they resented any efforts to persuade them to change their way of living. Indian scares were rumored from time to time but most of these proved to be without foundation. In 1853 the Indians had been moved to the reservation, but many refused to stay. Again and again they came back to camp on their old hunting grounds. Sometimes their fires spread to the white men's hay meadows.

In 1857 it was said that a band of outlaw Wahpekute Indians under Chief Inkpaduta ~~after murdering~~ having murdered settlers near the Iowa border, was advancing on Mankato and the Minnesota Valley. Le Sueur County was thrown into a panic. But Le Sueur settlers relaxed again when Inkpaduta fled to the west. Friendly Indians and white soldiers went after him, but he was never captured. Some have said that his escape weakened the Indian's respect for the white man's authority.

Wandering groups of Indians habitually walked into the settlers' cabins without knocking. Some of them were thieves, and terrorized the women and children. On the whole, however, red men and white men got along pretty well. As they could not understand each other's language, they used to converse by gestures or sign language. There were many localities where the whites treated the Indians as neighbors. A few even made intimate friends among them.

A pioneer who lived as a boy in Sharon Township has expressed this

friendly attitude of the settlers in his recollections: "The country was full of Indians when I was a boy. They were everywhere, and we never knew when they would appear at our cabin. There was one large camp near St. Thomas and another on the shores of Rice Lake. The braves spent their time hunting and fishing or staging their tribal dances, and other ceremonies. They did not molest the whites, however, and we got along nicely with them. In fact, Indian boys were my playmates, and I had a great time with them. We used to shoot small game with bows and arrows and I became as proficient with the bow and arrow as most of the Indian boys. I never feared them, and it seemed strange to me as a lad that they went on the warpath. I learned more about the circumstances which caused the trouble later on, but at the time I was puzzled."

The Sioux War

Today, too, it is hard to realize that at one time all white civilization in Minnesota was in danger of being wiped out by the Indians.

By 1862, the Dakotahs were enraged at delay in the annual payments promised them by the Treaties of 1851. Some of their people were reported starving. Thomas J. Galbraith, a Shakopee lawyer, had been appointed agent at the Yellow Medicine Upper Indian Agency. It has been said that he was not qualified, did not protect the rights of the Indians, and that he was not at all diplomatic. About this time a trader at the upper agency, asked what the Indians should eat, replied, "If they are hungry, let them eat grass."

All these things increased the tension, until only a spark was needed to cause an explosion. That spark came in August, 1862, with the murder of five white persons at Action, in Meeker County, by a group of braves formerly of Chief Shakpe's band. Old Chief Shakpee II, a friend of the white men, had just died. His son was stupid and Hockokoduta, brother of the old chief, became the real leader of the band.

Hockokoduta hated the white men, and although he had not planned the Action attack, now that it happened he thought the time to strike had come. Many of the white warriors were far away fighting in the South. White blood had already been shed and would be avenged.

Since Hockokoduta was not a hereditary chief, he was not considered worthy of leading an Indian rebellion. To get higher authority for a general attack on the settlers, he took the murderers to the encampment of the more famous chief, Little Crow.

Little Crow was at first doubtful and indifferent, but after long argument was all but forced to accept command of the rebellion. The first extensive killings took place at the Lower Indian Agency, near what is now Redwood Falls. Among the first white men to be killed was the trader who had said the Indians should eat grass if they were hungry. He was found with his mouth stuffed with grass.

When the news reached Governor Ramsey, he immediately put Henry H. Sibley in charge of the white troops. Sibley at once started by boat up the Minnesota River with four companies of infantry. Many of the soldiers were recruits who had just enlisted in the Civil War. They arrived at Fort Snelling ~~just~~ in time to be sent back to fight the Sioux.

Had the Chippewas and the Winnebago Sioux joined the Dakotahs in this uprising, Minnesota history might have been different. But the Chippewa, traditional enemies of the Sioux, decided to stay out of it, and the Winnebago Indians loved peace.

Although most able-bodied men had already gone to the Civil War, citizen-soldier units were organized in Le Sueur County, as elsewhere. The raids did not reach quite into their county, but many Le Sueur County recruits saw action elsewhere.

The most famous of these Indian fighters was a company known as the Le Sueur Tigers, led by Captain Tousley. The Tigers rescued settlers

near Fort Leavenworth, and two units helped defend New Ulm, where they had an important part in driving off the Indian attack. Five of them were killed in that engagement.

Col. Charles E. Flandrau, in charge of the defense of New Ulm, had drawn up his men for battle outside of the town, but in the first rush 60 were killed or wounded. The defenders fell back toward the town and Indians and white men fought on the very streets of the business district. The Le Sueur Tigers meanwhile had taken possession of a large mill, which they "loopholed and barricaded with sacks of wheat and flour." They helped to keep the Indians in the west part of town. This was on Saturday, August 23. The next day the Indians withdrew, and soon afterwards Flandrau retreated with 153 wagons of women, children, and wounded men to Mankato. Probably 1,500 whites had been saved.

Like most of the Minnesota Valley, Le Sueur County was thrown into a panic by even the hint of an Indian massacre. The settlers here felt that they had as much to fear as the settlers farther up the valley where the Indians lived on the reservation. In Le Sueur County Indians and whites lived together, almost like neighbors. But the Le Sueur County Sioux did not attack the settlers. They left the region to join the fighting elsewhere.

In spite of the fact that so many Indians turned upon the white men, it was Indian heroism and courage that often protected their white friends from those on the warpath. Some of the chiefs had been forced into battle against their better judgment, and secretly did all they could to protect white women and children.

Many Le Sueur County people fled to Belle Plaine, Jordan, and Shakopee, to the north, only to find that at those places, too, many residents had fled north to St. Paul or Fort Snelling. All the valley towns were in a state of confusion and terror.

In some cases settlers chose to stay on their claims, in spite of tales of the slaughter to the west of them. Many watched their neighbors go, taking a few belongings with them, sometimes even driving their stock ahead of them, but they stayed on. When a fresh Indian alarm reached them, they retreated to cellars or to caves they had dug in the woods.

In Le Sueur, after the men left to fight at New Ulm, the women were in terror. Mrs. Mayo, the wife of Dr. William W. Mayo, proved herself a heroine. She got all the women together and had them put on men's clothes. Then they stood on the edge of town shouldering rifles, and in some cases fence rails or sticks, so the Indians would think a large force of men guarded the homes. It may be that some Indian scout, seeing the make-believe garrison, went back to inform his fellows that Le Sueur was too well armed to attack.

Though Le Sueur County escaped the brunt of Indian vengeance, its settlers nevertheless suffered from the uprising. Stock had been turned loose, and grain fields were unharvested as the settlers fled for their lives. And after the uprising many farmers were afraid to come back into the valley, thus retarding settlement and progress.

The Dakotahs forfeited all their remaining lands. Most of them were shipped off to reservations in other states. A few still live in the Minnesota Valley, but in Le Sueur County the Indians who once owned Minnesota's forests and prairies are all but forgotten.

CHAPTER VII

INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

After the Sioux outbreak settlers in the Minnesota Valley were uncertain how to face the future. Farms had been abandoned, and in the towns business was uneasy. But before long it was seen that foreign immigration was not diminishing. ~~On the contrary~~ The following years brought an in-

creasing flood of European home-seekers. Then at the end of the Civil War soldiers began coming back from the South, and setting about the work of reconstruction. The settlers were reimbursed by the Government for their losses in the Sioux War. Above all, rich farm lands still remained, and soon the valley was humming with activity again.

The Railroads

One factor in the expansion of Minnesota and of Le Sueur County was the improved transportation and communication afforded by the new railways. After steamboat and coach came the trains, traveling on iron roadways that in the end reached every part of the county.

As early as the middle fifties rail lines were proposed through the valley, and boom towns sometimes sprang up along their route, and died again when the roads failed to come through.

One such was the Southern Minnesota Railroad Company, whose tracks proposed to follow the river route through Le Sueur County. Construction of a road bed was begun in the fifties, but was soon abandoned. Many such ventures collapsed during the panic of 1857.

In 1862 the first Minnesota railroad was opened to traffic, and the first locomotive went from St. Paul to St. Anthony. Two years later, the Minnesota Valley Railroad Company was organized, with title to all lands and privileges previously granted the Southern Minnesota Road. Early in 1865 the old road bed was repaired, and the laying of rails began, starting from Mendota. At that time iron rails were used instead of steel. By fall the rails had reached Shakopee; the next year they had been extended as far as Belle Plaine.

At last came Le Sueur's turn to celebrate the railroads' coming. Wednesday, December 4, 1867, at 11:00 o'clock a locomotive, the "St. Peter", ital. pulled into the Le Sueur station. Then at 12:30 the locomotive "Belle Plaine" ital.

arrived, drawing two passenger coaches, one baggage car, and 13 freight cars.

On December 7 an excursion party of about 300 people in eight coaches drawn by the "Mankato" came to Le Sueur. Dinner was served at the Excelsior House, speakers celebrated the occasion, and merrymaking followed.

Afterward a program was arranged for a trip to St. Paul and return on the same day, with three hours to spend in St. Paul. The fare was $3.15; by stage it had been $5.

The next year this line reached East St. Peter, following the river along the western border of the county. About that time the road changed its name to the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, and began an extension of the line into Iowa. Still later, in 1880, this road became the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railroad, sometimes called simply The Omaha. It is now a part of the Northwestern System.

The next railroad in Le Sueur County was the Winona and St. Peter now also a part of the Northwestern system. This line crossed the Minnesota River in May, 1871, and was extended westward. Kasota is the only station in our county.

The third railroad was the Minneapolis and St. Louis, which reached this county in 1877, crossing the eastern section from north to south. Closely following the M. & St. L. was a division of the Milwaukee Road, passing through Montgomery, Le Center, Cleveland, and Kasota, and connecting Le Sueur County with St. Paul and with Mankato.

The last road built through our county was the "Dan Patch," an electric and steam road between Faribault and Mankato. Today this road is a part of the Great Western System. Its only stations in Le Sueur County are Waterville and Elysian.

Locomotives on these early railroads were wood burners, ridiculously small, with funnily little hooded smokestacks. Cutting railway firewood from

the Big Woods became an important occupation. Tie-making from the oak, white elm, and butternut of the local forest flourished in the county for many years.

The Quarries

The coming of the railroad aided local industry by providing a better market route to the outside world. The famous "Kasota Stone" was mined at an early date, soon after our county was settled, but nothing much was done to develop the industry until the railroad came. Afterwards the quarrying of building stone became the most important industry in Kasota and Le Sueur.

Kasota stone was not important until workers discovered that the rock will take a high polish. Then, although actually a hard limestone, a combination of ~~both~~ carbonate of lime and magnesium known technically as dolomite, the stone mined in Le Sueur County was often called Kasota "pink and yellow marble."

In 1905, when the new Minnesota State Capitol was being built, Kasota stone received its first nation-wide publicity. Much of the interior work--the halls, stairways, and floors--were of this stone, and soon it was widely known. It has now been used in more than 20 states, and its pink and yellow lustre has helped create the beautiful interiors of state capitols, hotels, railway stations, cathedrals, and office buildings throughout the nation.

Quarrying in Minnesota today is a great mineral industry, second only to iron mining, and Le Sueur County has played its part in making our state twelfth among all the states in the production of stone.

Other Industries

But quarrying wasn't the only industry that came into prominence

in Le Sueur County. Among the others were notably the milling and canning industries.

We have already told the story of flour milling in Le Sueur County, and the mills at New Prague and Montgomery.

An industry which developed later, and is now of great importance in our county is canning.

The Minnesota Valley Canning Company put up its first canning factory in 1903. Only corn was packed at first; by 1910 peas were canned also. The Cosgrove family played quite a part in developing this industry.

The company has been built almost entirely by local men. Del Maiz corn and Green Giant peas are now well known brands, and the industry founded in Le Sueur has expanded to many other Minnesota and Wisconsin towns; its annual gross business is about $3,400,000.

It has been estimated that the company feeds more than 250,000,000 people with Minnesota peas and corn. Its development of a production area of at least 30,000 acres especially suited to the growth of green vegetables, has been a significant factor in the prosperity of southern Minnesota and Le Sueur County.

Among the workers employed in the cannery at Le Sueur, are a great many Mexicans who work also in the sugar beet fields.

Many live in a typical Mexican village, about two blocks north of the plant, which they call Pueblocito Del Maiz, or Corn Village. Their small adobe houses are in interesting contrast to the modern city of Le Sueur.

There are several lesser industries in our county seat. In Le Sueur there is a concrete block, an ice cream, a sugar, and a cigar factory, and, of course, a creamery. Other towns have similar small industries. A furniture factory in Waterville has built up quite a reputation.

Waterville and Elysian are also the chief towns in a resort area.

Lake Elysian is one of the most beautiful in the county.

Since pioneer times, fishermen have come here even from nearby states. More recently, seining of rough fish has become a profitable industry. It is said that in 1916, 50,000 pounds of carp and buffalo fish were seined in one night from a lake near Elysian. The seine, 3000 feet long, was dropped through a channel cut in the ice, and it took a traction engine to draw the catch from the lake. These fish were usually shipped to New York, and brought the shippers from three to four cents a pound.

Banking

The progress of the county and the growth of industries led naturally to the founding of banks. The first bank in the county was established at Le Sueur in 1869 by George D. Snow. The Le Sueur County Bank was founded by L. Quackenbush in 1875.

The First State Bank of Montgomery was established as a private bank in 1890, and was chartered as a State Bank in 1903. In Le Sueur the First National was founded in 1894. In the early Twentieth Century, many banks were founded and today the Le Sueur County banks are an essential part of our business life.

Agriculture

In spite of the importance of some of its industries, however, Le Sueur County has always been and ~~remains~~ is today a typically rural, agricultural region. Even two of its foremost industries, milling and canning, are directly dependent upon farming. Most important, therefore, is the story of the development of agriculture.

The rich soil along the Minnesota Valley and in the Big Woods was widely known and naturally attracted those who wanted to be farmers. We have learned how the first settlers planted crops between stumps in tiny fields chopped out of the forests. The immigrants found the soil even richer than they dreamed, and with thrift and hard work, increased their

holdings. Some ~~of them would go~~ went without all comforts ~~and scrimp and~~ to save ~~to be able~~ enough to buy ~~some~~ a piece of land adjoining their own. ~~Now~~ in our county, ~~are~~ many of the most prosperous farmers in Minnesota today are.

Those who settled on the bottom lands were especially favored. The Minnesota Valley bottoms are more fertile than the surrounding area. Because of this, corn ripens from a week to ten days earlier than elsewhere, ~~then anywhere else,~~ and wheat ~~here~~ has yielded as high as 38 bushels to the acre.

However, those who settled here have always been faced with the threat of flood. Though it is the successive floods that have enriched the land with layers of fine silt, high waters are likely also to wash out the seed, or leave the richer soil covered with layers of sand. The years 1881, 1903, and 1927 were bad flood years. In 1927 loss to the farmers of the Minnesota Valley was estimated at $200,000.

At times grasshoppers have been more of a menace to agriculture in Le Sueur County than even the worst flood. ~~Small hordes~~ They were reported in various parts of the State from time to time, ~~with~~ and did scattered damage, but the worst plague did not come until the '70's. By 1876 these insects were ravaging the entire Minnesota Valley. In fact, almost all of the state suffered, and it began to be a question whether insects or man would take over the ~~State.~~ land.

~~Sometimes~~ They came in hordes like a roaring wind, and after their passing every green thing in their path had disappeared. Whole fields of grain were destroyed in a few hours. Trains were blockaded, and the pests had to be shoveled from the tracks; sometimes they were piled along roads to a depth of two feet.

The frantic settlers did everything they could. They dug ditches, burned fields, invented "Hopperdozers" smeared with hot tar to catch the grasshoppers like flies on flypapers. Millions were destroyed; other millions took their places.

By the spring of 1877 the plague had begun to be a menace to life itself.

Families were destitute. Governor John S. Pillsbury personally traveled among the sufferers and gave away large sums of his own money.

A convention was held in Omaha to consider methods of defense. Congress was petitioned for aid. A bill was passed authorizing a bounty of $1 a bushel for the insects, and 50 cents a gallon for their eggs.

Then religious organizations throughout the State began to sponsor days of special prayer.

In response to this feeling, Governor Pillsbury proclaimed April 26, 1877, a day of general fasting and prayer, on which everyone was to pray for the lifting of the plague. Despite a few scoffers, the State on that day became a huge church; young and old, on the farm, in every village, city, and hamlet, joined together to pray.

The pests hatched that spring as usual but in the summer they took flight and disappeared. They left in hordes and clouds. No one knows what happened to them or where they went, but the settlers were grateful for their going.

Since that year there have been no locust plagues of equal severity, although from time to time they have been troublesome. Insects remain one of man's most dangerous enemies. Today the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Entomology, employs hundreds of men and spend thousands of dollars annually on insect control, an important phase of crop production.

Of early Minnesota agriculture, wheat was the staple crop. In some localities the farmers planted hardly anything else; wheat was called the "money crop." It was not long before this seeding the land to wheat year after year began to wear out the soil. In bad wheat years, the farmers were left with nothing until gradually the mistake of the one-crop system was realized.

In Le Sueur County diversified farming was accepted by many from the beginning. The soil permitted a wide choice in crops, and a few farmers turned their attention to such things as tobacco culture, hops, maple sugar,

and honey. By 1895 corn was grown with success following the introduction of new and improved varieties of seed. Most important for Minnesota was an earlier-maturing corn, and soon after it was introduced the corn crop in Le Sueur County exceeded that of wheat. Because of the canning factories, corn is still more important, although no farmers in our county rely any longer on a single crop.

Sugar beets ~~is~~ are another important if a less common crop in Le Sueur County today. In Montgomery and Lanesburg Townships for a few years there were extensive beet fields, and several hundred car loads of beets were shipped annually to the Minnesota Sugar Company factory at Chaska. Today the acreage in sugar beets has declined, probably in favor of crops used in dairying, such as alfalfa and clover.

Great changes in farming have come during the last thirty-five years. Dairying, crop rotation and diversification, and poultry raising have become more and more important. Thirty years ago there was very little farm machinery, little dairying, and mixed or diversified farming was still unusual. Less stock was raised, and silos were almost unknown. Today stock feeding is an important factor on any farm. Hogs, for instance, that used to be fed on slops and refuse are now raised on balanced rations. Hundreds of cars of hogs and cattle are shipped to South St. Paul from our county annually.

Before the invention of modern farm machinery the methods of farming had changed relatively little in centuries. With the reaper in 1831, harvesting underwent a gradual change, but in 1871 there were some old-fashioned cradles still in use in Le Sueur County. That same year it is said that there were more oxen than horses about Le Sueur. The first steam threshers appeared in our county in the late '70's. They caused a tremendous excitement, and made great differences in crop production.

Another phase of our changing agriculture is the rapid growth of

dairying. Dairying today is one of the chief factors in the prosperity of our county.

In 1860 Le Sueur County had about 1,500 cows. By 1890 this number had increased to over 8,000, but dairying was still not a paying business. Most butter was still made in dasher churns on the farms, and when traded at the village stores brought from 6 to 15¢ a pound. The quality was not uniform and the color irregular; hence, there was no outside demand. The county had two cheese factories and one creamery.

Cheese factories in New Prague, opened in 1888, but creamery machinery was practically unknown.

The year 1890 began a new period in dairying. From that time production of butter and factories began to increase rapidly. It was found that a more uniform, better grade of butter could be made in creameries, and the demand for Minnesota butter began to spread. Neighboring farmers cooperated, and took turns bringing their milk to town. Labor-saving machinery on the farm that allowed more time for dairying, and the Babcock tester for butter fat were both factors that helped promote the new dairy interest. By 1900, the mechanical cream separator was in general use and the old crock and pan method of skimming cream from the milk was being discarded rapidly.

Improved methods of care and feeding of cattle, the introduction of better, warmer barns, and the sowing of milk-producing crops, all improved the quality, and increased the demand for dairy products. The introduction of pure bred herds raised both standards and profits, and opened the eastern market.

By the '90's discussion of cooperative creameries had begun, and in 1893 the first cooperative creamery in our county was organized at Kasota. The next year, the Kilkenny Cooperative Creamery and the Waterville Cooperative Creamery were organized. Today cooperatives handle a large share of

the dairy products, and serve the farmer in other ways as well.

Dairying, which has become one of the main branches of agriculture everywhere in the State, is now the backbone of prosperity in our county.

Le Sueur has many achievements in agriculture to its credit. From 1920 to 1930, when the size of the average farm in Minnesota was decreasing, the average farm in Le Sueur County increased. Our county has the third lowest farm tenancy rate in the State; that means that fewer farmers in this county are renters and proportionately more own their farms.

According to figures for 1935, Le Sueur County leads all others in the State in the production of winter wheat, and in peas produced for commercial canneries; it is fourth in the production of sweet corn, and seventh in the value of vegetables harvested for sale.

Progressive farm organizations have done much for the development of agriculture. The Grangers, 4-H clubs, and many others help the farmer in various ways. Our first county agricultural society was formed in 1857 or 1858, and has held annual exhibits since that time. At the County Fair, sponsored by the Le Sueur County Agricultural Society and held in August of each year at Le Center, the newest methods and products of scientific farming are always displayed.

With all this progress, however, growth in the population has not kept pace. The pinnacle was reached about 1900, when the county census showed 20,234 persons living here. But from that time on, the population has declined.

As early as the '70's there had begun an exodus of Minnesota Valley farmers toward the prairie lands of Dakota. But at that time hundreds of immigrants were still pouring in, and the population grew steadily.

By 1900 immigration began to fall off, and from 1900 to 1910 hundreds were going north to Canada or west to claim government land in new territories.

Most of the villages in the county began to grow smaller then, some losing as many as two hundred people. In 1930 the population was 17,990.

The turn of the century brought other changes to Le Sueur County. While new ideas and inventions were affecting agriculture, other inventions and theories had begun to change also the pattern and standards of American life.

The machine age had begun, and this influenced not only work but social life generally. The talk was of new amusements and new ways of living. Phonograph concerts, telephones, electric lighting, and automobiles were still exciting marvels.

Automobiles were at first a luxury only the wealthy could afford, and a ten mile motor trip was considered quite a journey. Automobiles often stopped, in those days, for no apparent reason. Farmers were slow in supporting highway improvements and there was bitter antagonism at first to "road booster." The country people said it was mainly the city "big bugs" who argued for better roads, and that the new "contraptions" were frightening teams into ditches and were a danger to the countryside. But as the automobile became more common, this attitude changed. Today Le Sueur County has hundreds of miles of smooth-surfaced roads, and nearly every farm home has its automobiles.

Around 1900 the first squeaky phonographs fitted with head phones came into use, and within the next decade the first "cinemas" thrilled small audiences who did not dream they were seeing the beginnings of our huge, modern moving picture industry.

In 1898 Le Sueur County men took part in the Spanish American War. In 1917 it was not so easy for a population of German extraction to approve a declaration of war against the "Fatherland." Many of our German-born citizens at first were torn between two loyalties, but when war was actually declared in 1917, they were loyal to their adopted land. Many of us know

now that no one gains by war, that in the long run both victor and vanquished are losers.

Le Sueur County, which today is one of the richest and most productive in Minnesota, has been built by the patient thrift and courage of its earlier citizens, a few of whom have become well known far beyond the county boundaries.

One such citizen was Tracy Bangs, son of A. W. Bangs, a lawyer who came to Le Sueur in 1861 or 1862. The Bangs were Democrats, as were most Le Sueur County folks in the early years, but when Tracy was nineteen they moved from Le Sueur to Grand Forks, N. D., where to be a Democrat was to be in great disfavor. Said the father to the son, "Tracy, this is an uncanny land, where the Irish vote the Republican ticket and the river flows north." Tracy became a famous lawyer, known in many cities of this country, and though not then a resident of our county, he came back several times to visit Le Sueur, the city of his youth.

Thomas Hamilton Smullen came with his parents to Lexington Township in 1863. At twenty-two he was elected to the State Legislature, the youngest man ever to hold that office. Afterward he held many other city and county offices, and, though not a lawyer, was made a judge and allowed to practice in Probate Court. In 1930 when he was 78, he was elected to the State Senate, and was then the oldest member of the legislature as he had once been its youngest.

Perhaps our most distinguished citizen was George T. Plowman. Architect, lecturer, and author, Mr. Plowman also won fame in many cities of the world for his etchings. He was born in Le Sueur in 1869, the son of a blacksmith. After studying at the University of Minnesota, he spent several years in art centers abroad. He has exhibited his pictures in many cities, both in America and Europe, and examples of his work are in the Royal Academy in

London, and in the art collection of the Congressional Library at Washington. His most famous pieces are his studies of the fast-disappearing covered bridges of Europe. He often visited Le Sueur, the last time just before his death in 1931.

These, together with hundreds whose names are not known only to neighbors and friends, are worthy sons of our pioneers who hewed a civilization for us out of the Big Woods. The Indian trails they followed have given way to smooth surfaced highways, steamboat, and stage coach to streamlined trains and automobiles. Life has quickened its pace in our county since those early days.

Yet every spring still brings out the harrow and drill, and every autumn the reaper. The Big Woods vanished but it left behind the leaf mold that has made our rich black soil, upon which people of Le Sueur County still build their prosperity. And in spite of the hundreds of new interests that clamor for attention in the press, and over the radio, the weather, crop prospects, and market conditions are still of vital concern to our people.

Giant buildings, great ships, and busy factories have no part in the lives of Le Sueur County. Our people are content with their rich farms, their fine schools, their beautiful countryside, and the kindliness of neighbors who have never lost their contact with the good earth their grandparents won for them from the virgin forests.

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