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NORMAN COUNTY

Including the City of Ada

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3 Norman County is in the heart of the Red River Valley, ^{dering} bordering that river and in the fertile district adjacent to North Dakota. Glacial Lake Agassiz played a prominent part in forming the topography of this area of 860 square miles. The surface is almost flat, varying in altitude from 900 feet on the west to 1,200 feet on the east near the glacial lake beaches and ice sheet moraines.

Although much of the region is covered by a black loam, with a clay subsoil, offering rich farming lands, there are swampy sections. State drainage ditches have reclaimed most of these, coupled with the natural stream drainage of the Red River of the North and the Wild Rice and Buffalo rivers. The absence of lakes in Norman County indirectly is an advantage since that condition reduces the drainage problem. Precipitation of 20.58 inches annually is normal and does not increase the swampy areas. An agreeable range of temperatures from a maximum of 50.4° to a minimum of 27.1°, yearly averages, supports a growing season of 119 days for this exceptional valley land.

Along the timbered banks of the rivers are to be found the only trees of this county's prairie flora. The level expanse of dry sections and the slough edges have growths of heavy grasses and rushes, ideal shelter for game birds. Norman County is a mecca for the well informed prairie chicken hunter; imported

ring-necked pheasants are also numerous.

Norman County, named for the Kingdom of the Normans of France, was settled as a part of Polk County in the late '60's by French, Norwegian and German groups seeking farm homes. They were people of several races and all grades of prosperity and fame. Few came with rank and money, but all proved that success in a northern, pioneer state could be bought with the coins of strong physique, stubborn determination and patience, willingness and a knowledge of all kinds of hard work. The greatest progress took place where each class and person recognized the qualities of others.

The first railroad was the St. Paul and Pacific which today is known as the Great Northern. Difficulties were experienced in laying tracks due to the low, wet land; it was hard to build a foundation for the roadway and to secure good material. Half of the ties from Minneapolis and Fergus Falls had to be discarded. The acreage in this district was owned by the railroad. It maintained a land office in Moorhead for the granting of homesteads. A settler was obliged to pay \$2.50 per acre, promise to plant ten acres of trees and cultivate the land for five years.

Illinois and Iowa furnished many of these homesteaders in 1879. One room houses were constructed of sod, which was cut from the prairies and piled up into walls.; a roof was built by covering the top of the walls with brambles and then sod. Barns for oxen were formed in the same manner. Horses were rare, costing \$200 an animal irregardless of age. Milch cows were almost unheard of in these days. Before the railroad ox-drawn carts were the only means of transportation to and from Georgetown, the Hudson Bay trading post, and stores in Crookston and Moorhead. ^{Wheat} ~~What~~ was a medium of exchange.

Coffee was a greatly prized commodity that was seldom available, roasted barley being used as its substitute.

Prairie fires added to the frontier hardships. The new farmers had no easy task working the mud and clay of the undrained districts, soil, heavy enough, to break some of their crude ~~mx~~ implements. The first threshing machine was the old circle type, operated by blindfolded horses. A steam rig was brought into this country during 1883.

Norman County was unusually fortunate in having outstanding pioneers, not only of the hardy laboring class, but also gentlemen of genuine culture whose aristocratic influence helped every neighborhood. Reverend O. M. Ness was one of the original pastors of this region. He was the founder of Concordia College in Moorhead, being its president for five years and later a financial trustee. For many years Reverend Ness was the spiritual adviser of the entire Lutheran faith. He sent tickets to worthy young people in Norway, who would make desirable residents in this state. During his years of study in Germany and Norway he acquired a valuable library of rare, early editions,; these books are now in the possession of Concordia College.

Harry Richards and his wife, Sally, came to the Perley settlement in 1879. His previous interests had been coal mining and transportation. Richards represented a class somewhat different than the other Perley residents. His two children had French and German governesses and tutors. The family carriage, a yellow Victoria, was drawn by black horses and driven by a negro coachman in livery. The farm hands lived in a "farm house" and the "family house" was a mansion for that period. The silver dishes, including a gigantic turkey platter, from old Boston, oriental rugs and European furniture

were strange sights for the Norwegian peasants. Pâté de foie gras (goose liver meat paste, or pies) imported from France in small porcelaine bowls, French cheese, specially prepared sweets, home raised squabs and rare old wine graced the Richards' table.

The village bank, the live stock association and others were greatly aided by Richards' activities. He imported Brown Swiss stock to create the best dairy herd in Norman County; the same was true of his horses. The sanitary conditions of the family house and other building were lessons to the whole riverside. Richards and Mrs. Richards exhibited a courtesy and high type of social behavior from the examples of which all the young people of Perley directly benefited.

Another large estate of the county belonged to de Cazenove. M. de Cazenove came to this county in the early 70's for the purpose of founding a summer resort on the Wild Rice River. His plan was not successful as the lakes were more popular. However, the large farm upon which he lived was soon noted for its splendid organization and consistent profits, in contrast to other estates. He amassed a fortune from wheat by intelligent farming, teaching young men his successful methods and awarding them the same opportunities.

Several interesting tales are told about the de Cazenove household. He brought with him from Virginia ~~was~~ servants, negroes, among whom was Black Lizzie. Late in the fall, when she was the only resident in the house, others being in the field harvesting, pieces of silverware disappeared. When Lizzie packed later, in preparation for a return to Virginia, most of the loot was discovered in her baggage. The traditions of old world manor owners were respected even in the rude environment of Norman County as the local police refused to make efforts to arrest the offender. They held that the de Cazenove farm was proprietary in its right over negro labor.

B. O. Lee represented the class of pioneers coming with bare hands to the task of building a career in western Minnesota. Arriving in Norman County in 1867, Ole Lee possessed only \$12.50 with which to start his life here. At the end of two years service on a neighbor's farm, Lee had enough cash with which to buy a heifer and take ^{her} to his claim. During the next five years he bought a section adjoining ^{ing} his farm in what is now known as Lee township. This progress testifies to his industry, frugale living and wise farming methods in obtaining the golden wheat harvest of this county. The soil was virgin, the price good, plenty of rainfall, weeds unknown, and after the grasshopper devastation of 1875, wheat crops were phenomenal and brought prosperity to all.

Lee sought by every means to improve his community, his family environment and himself. The first town meeting was held in his home. Lee was chosen as the representative for this county and conducted land operations, as the duties of his office, in Alexandria, 130 miles distant, reaching that city by ox cart or on Indian ponies. He was the organizer of the first district school and helped build the original log church in the township. Lee returned to Norway to end his years, after the death of his wife.

Other pioneer citizens left as a monument of their efforts the city of Ada, county seat on Norman County, named for the daughter of one of the Great Northern Railroad officials. A post office was reported to have been established at Ada as early as 1872. In the year 1878 the town (still in Polk County) had its village charter. James J. Hill and others plotted Ada's square mile on December 5th., 1881. Ada became a city of the fourth class in 1908.

Although agricultural interests attracted the first residents to Ada, lumber milling actually caused its growth and survival,

providing employment for many and money for families suffering from lean crop years. The Wild Rice River was the thoroughfare for logs that brought prosperity to Ada. The first large sawmill in the city was started by the Wild Rice Limber Company during 1897; smaller mills had been running prior to that date. The logs came from forests seventy-five ^{miles} to the east of this point, being floated down the above-mentioned river. In the sawing season about three hundred men, on a double shift of day and night hours, found employment. The surrounding populace secured cheap fuel from the by-products of the mill, as well as low-priced lumber for erecting homes. Nearly 2,000,000 feet of ^{lumber} ~~timber~~ were cut in Ada during 1898. As many as 4,500,000 feet of logs have been driven to Ada during a season.

A wide, deep canal, or race-way, was excavated by the waters of the Wild Rice River near Ada through which immense rafts of timber were floated each spring and summer. A large lake, or basin, near the mill received these logs and there they were stored until needed for sawing. A railroad side track provided cars for shipment of the pine lumber to many different states. The mill closed down~~ed~~ forever after the year 1924, when practically all timber had been cut. It remain^s as a dismantled old shed to recall the busy place that made so much lumber and employed hundreds of men in the years that are past.

Other mills or factories flourished during the settlement of Ada. For many years the flax growing industry was extensive. Its center was in this town where a thriving flaxmill treated the straw in the rough for shipment to mills with finer machinery. Flour milling was boomed here in 1894, a larger and improved mill and grain elevator being added with passing years. Fire destroyed this mill in 1924. A cigar factory was established in the spring of 1902

by Heler and Portretshe. The city has been widely advertised by this still existing industry through an annual output of about 300,000 cigars.

Norman County has a population of approximately 14,000. Ada's estimated census is 1,850 people. The county schools have 706 registered pupils, and Ada, 499.

The Commercial Club of this city possesses a library and a small number of volumes are listed in the high school. As yet, there is no authorized public library.

The first residents held religious services in their homes. One of the original churches was a Catholic mission, a priest journeying from Moorhead to read the Mass. Besides the Catholic, the denominations represented here are: Congregational, English and German Methodists, ~~and~~ Episcopal and the Norwegian Lutheran.

Ada is beautified by two public parks. The City Park is near West Main Street and extends over an area of one block; here is located the stand for the municipal band. Pfund Park is of the same size as the City Park and has a fine enclosure of shade trees, walks and resting spots, all surrounded by attractive residents. The block for this park was donated by F. L. Hanson and named for John Pfund, who had charge of its landscaping.

n A presentable nine hole golf course is adjacent to the city. Baseball is a favorite sport in this community, teams competing successfully with aggregations of much larger places. Countless field, game birds make Ada the hunters' objective during the fall seasons.

12 Ada is 265 miles northwest of St. Paul and Minneapolis and 47 miles northeast of Fargo, North Dakota, on paved US 75 the "International Route, Winnipeg to Galveston". TH 31 goes from here to

Mahnomen, east, and TH 82 connects Ada with the Lake Region and Fergus Falls, to the southeast. The Great Northern Railroad, with a \$25,000 depot, forms the rail facilities.

This city has one commercial hotel, the Hotel Ada, 35 rooms, E., rates from \$1 to \$1.25, modern and unrestricted parking privileges. There is ^a centrally located tourist camp with fireplaces, fuel, artesian water, electricity, shade trees and police protection.

Norman County has gained prosperity through extensive dairying pursuits and the raising of potatoes and small grains. Ada has a co-operative creamery and co-operative live stock shipping association. There are four banks here; post office receipts total upwards of \$9,000. The water and light plant of Ada is valued at \$50,000. Twin Valley, Halstad and Berup are growing Norman County villages that have not only assisted in furthering the welfare of this district, but have helped make Ada a shopping ^{center} and worthy, little metropolis.

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HISTORY OF NORMAN COUNTY

Norman County, located in the northwestern part of the state, is bounded on the north by Polk County, Mahnomen on the east, Clay and Becker Counties on the south, and Red River, which forms the state and county boundary, on the west. In 1847, the area now known as Norman County was included in Pembina County and was part of an area from which 9 counties have been cut. The present county was organized in 1881, with Ada as the county seat, and covered 1436 square miles of nearly flat agricultural land, from which, in 1906, 576 square miles were cut to form Mahnomen County.

1736
 Early explorers had traveled through the present state of Minnesota and along the Mississippi, but La Verendrye was the first to explore the northwestern part of the state. In 1736 he was commissioned by the French government to find a route to the Pacific via the Canadian-United States boundary, and to establish trading posts for the North West Fur Company. After establishing 6 along the northern border, he ran into trouble with the Dahkotah Indians. At Lake Winnipeg he and his men were forced to retrace their route.

1779
 Trading posts began to make their appearance along the Red River as early as 1779. The first was occupied by Alexander Henry until 1808. He and his sons were among the early explorers of the Lake of the Woods region. Although there is no definite information as to the exact location of the early trading posts in Norman County, it is known that many of the traders travelled through and traded in this region.

All the land on the east side of the Mississippi River was known as part of

the Indiana Territory and that west as the Louisiana. The Louisiana Territory, including the area from the Gulf to Canada and from the Mississippi to the Rockies, was purchased by the United States from Napoleon in 1803.

After gaining possession of the Louisiana Territory, it was important that the government explore and fortify the Mississippi River from its source to its mouth. Lieutenant Pike was sent to the Mississippi Valley for this purpose. Upon arriving at what is known as St. Paul, he explored the adjoining territory to learn the needs and possibilities for fortification in that region. After making the survey, he continued up the Mississippi to what is now known as Pike Island, where a council was held with the Indians, and a treaty drawn up, whereby a grant of land, 9 miles wide on either side of the river, was given the government in return for a specified payment and promise of protection. Although the terms of this treaty were not carried out until ten years later, it paved the way for early settlement in the northwestern part of the state. Many who had made their homes along the Mississippi moved farther north and west, and some probably settled in the Norman County region.

In 1811, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, seeing the need of relief for Scotch Highlanders who had been evicted from their lands, bought the controlling interest in the Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company, and obtained over 100,000 square miles of land for colonization. The grant, known as Assiniboine, was located in the northwestern part of the state, along both sides of the Red River and west along the Assiniboine River. The following year 70 Scotchmen arrived at the North West Fur post at Pembina in the Red River Valley. Rivalry between the Hudson Bay and North West Fur Companies caused much suffering among the Selkirk settlers. Employees of the North West Company bribed the Indians to attack the settlers. Other immigrants from Scotland and the Orkneys settled at a place called Kildonan, named for a parish in Scotland. Between 1813-1816 over 200 settlers had arrived. In 1815, after repeated attacks, the settlers

were driven from their settlement by the Indians. Upon reaching Lake Winnipeg, they were met by Colin Robertson, a representative of the Hudson Bay Fur Company, who was en route with immigrants intending to settle at Kildonan. The others were persuaded to return to the settlement. In 1816, a band of half-breed buffalo hunters, under the command of North West Company officials, attacked the governor and colonists, causing them to withdraw down the Red River, many of them settling as far south as Norman County.

In 1815, news had reached Selkirk in England of the conditions in the settlement and before 1817 he made his first visit to the colonists. Upon his arrival, Selkirk made his way to Fort William, where he remained with part of his company, sending others on to reinforce the colony. He held a council with the Indians, and a grant of land was given to the Selkirk interests. This grant extended from the mouth of the Red River to the present site of Grand Forks. After making the treaty, Selkirk travelled on to visit the Pembina and Kildonan settlements.

Because of conditions, many of the settlers left the colonies for new homes. They were replaced by colonists of Swiss descent, some of them families of Swiss soldiers who had been mustered out of the army after the War of 1812. The majority, with little or no knowledge of farming, became dependent upon the fur companies for their livelihood. In 1821, because of scarcity of food and hardships, many were forced to leave. Some joined the fur trading posts along the Red River, Red Lake, and Leech Lake, while others travelled on until they reached Fort Snelling. Here they were given protection and were allowed to settle on the military tract near the fort.

The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux at Mendota in 1856 opened the territory in the central part of the state for white settlement. Steamboats operating on the Mississippi brought to St. Paul trade that previously had been sent over northern routes to Canada. Red River Carts transported cargoes from the

northern settlements to the northmost point of steamboat navigation. These carts, crude two-wheel affairs drawn by oxen and carrying a load from 500 to 800 pounds, very probably were routed through what is now Norman County.

The first carts from as far north as Pembina left in 1844. The train was under the supervision of Norman Kittson, then in charge of the American Fur Company's interests. Because of his endeavors and interests in this region, both Norman and Kittson Counties bear his name. This mode of transportation, supervised by Kittson, became so economical that within the next ten years all the old northern water routes were abandoned. The Hudson Bay Company soon adopted this mode of travel, with routes from Forts Garry and Abercrombie to Fishers Landing on Rainy River.

Missions were established at Pembina soon after the colony was settled. The first services were held in homes, later missions and churches were established. The first outside missionaries to visit the colony were Frederick Ayer and Spencer, who came from the settlements at Red and Gull Lakes in 1842-43.

In 1857, James J. Hill arrived at St. Paul from Canada with the intention of traveling on to Fort Garry. Missing the last trip of the Red River Carts, he was forced to remain in St. Paul for the winter. The following spring he went on to Fort Garry, where he started his own company of Red River Carts, operating them between there and St. Paul. Later he gained control of the steamboats operating between points of navigation. Now that his company was established and operating at a lower cost than the northern water routes, he set out for Pembina to arrange for a contract for the Hudson Bay Company's freight. A partnership was formed with Smith, then in charge of the Hudson Bay interests, whereby all their freight was to be carried by the Red River carts via St. Paul.

In 1867, the St. Paul & Pacific, Minnesota's first railroad, extended as far north as St. Cloud. After Smith and Hill had formed a partnership, Norman

Kittson, who was now a St. Paul banker, joined them in establishing a company called the Red River Transportation Company. This company handled all the transportation from Pembina to the head of navigation and later purchased the interests of the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, extending that road to connect with one being built south from Winnipeg. The company built another road from St. Anthony Falls to Crookston, and later extended it 15 miles to Fishers Landing. The name of the St. Paul & Pacific was later changed to the Great Northern.

The Northern Pacific planned on constructing a transcontinental road from Lake Superior to Puget Sound. Failure of the Jay Cooke Company in 1873 forced the company to abandon work, with tracks completed between Lake Superior and the Red River Valley. As a result, settlements sprang up rapidly in the territory now known as Norman and Polk Counties.

Today the Great Northern is the main road serving the county; the Northern Pacific touches only the extreme western part. The Northland-Greyhound Bus Lines and many small truck lines handle the passenger and freight trade on direct routes throughout Norman County.

During the early days of the territory, fur trading was the chief source of revenue; later saw mills appeared along the Red, Rice, and Marsh Rivers. After the decline of the lumbering industry, farms were cultivated. Up until 1920 wheat was the chief export of the county, but during the last ten years dairying and livestock raising have increased in the county. Today, in this county, there are 10 co-operative creameries, two co-operative warehouses, and two livestock shipping centers, at Ada and Hendrum. About 97.5% of all the land in Norman County is in farms.

The chief highways are: US #75; and MSH #31, #32, #81, and #82. Most of the roads are improved gravel or dirt.

Between 1890 and 1900 the population showed an increase of nearly one-third, followed by a 10.7% increase in the next 10 years, then a drop of 5.5% by 1930,

when the population was 14,061, or 16.4 persons per square mile.

Ada was first established in 1874, incorporated as a village in 1881, and as a city in 1920. Located in the center of the county it is equidistant from two trading centers, Crookston and Fargo. In addition to its four large grain elevators, Ada has a power plant, flour mill, feed mill, co-operative creamery and warehouse, stock yard, and Standard Oil Storage wells. Many of the local products find ready market at Crookston and Fargo, surplus grains and livestock are sent to Grand Forks and St. Paul. The fair grounds and airplane landing field compare with those of much larger cities in adjoining counties. Health needs are serviced by two small hospitals attended by three doctors and seven nurses.

The earliest Indians in this territory were the Dahkotahs, who were later driven west by the Ojibways. Rivalry between the Hudson Bay interests, and the North West Fur Company caused much trouble between the Indians and the early settlers.

There is only one large mound in the vicinity of Norman County. It is located three miles southwest of Crookston, on the south shore of the Red River. It is about 7 feet high and 120 feet in diameter, and in addition to bones, contains the remnants of broken pottery, shells, arrowheads, and war implements.

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