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### WILKIN COUNTY

Wilkin County, in western Minnesota, is typical of the well-developed agricultural counties of the Red River Valley in which it lies. Formerly one of the main wheat producing counties of the State, it has kept pace with progressive agricultural methods and the trend toward greater diversification.

Its transformation from the single crop era to the present day vogue of highly diversified farming has been facilitated by the rapid improvements made in transportation. The natural result of the latter has been the increase of markets for its products. From Breckenridge, the county seat, it is 216 miles into the Twin Cities, the largest market center in the Northwest; to Fargo, N. Dak., and Moorhead, Minnesota, the distance is only 45 miles over US 75; and 155 miles to Grand Forks, N. Dak.

Situated as it is in the highly fertile and picturesque Red River Valley, Wilkin County is indeed an inviting country. Good schools, good roads, and a large number of farmers' cooperatives stand as partial evidence of its progressiveness.

Perhaps the most evident transtion<sup>^</sup> which farming in this section is undergoing in response to changing physical and economic conditions is the decrease in wheat acreage in favor of feed crops. The acreage of corn and potatoes has expanded rapidly during the last <sup>10</sup>ten years; that of legumes is increasing. With an increasing amount of feed crops, livestock enterprises are on the increase. Thus a system of mixed farming is gradually displacing the old system, under which the farmer gave his attention almost exclusively to spring grains.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Since 1890 the trend in wheat acreage has been downward and with few exceptions that of oats and barley has been upward, as has that of legumes in more recent years. The latter is a good index of the growing importance of livestock. The happy combination of fertile soil, a warm growing season, and ample rainfall make this county a good farming community. With a growth in the population of neighboring urban markets, Wilkin will realize more and more opportunities.

## PHYSICAL SETTING

Wilkin is the southernmost county in the Red River Valley, west of Otter Tail. It is 42 miles long from north to south, and from 14 to 24 miles wide, the width increasing toward the north, with an area of 745 square miles. Since all of the county except a narrow strip only a few miles wide in the northwest part near Rothsay lies within the basin of former Lake Agassiz, the western part has the usual lake-bottom flat, while/ in the central and eastern parts are the sloping shore zones of successive beach ridges. The county has no lakes.

Topography

The surface of Wilkin is a treeless plain. The county lies wholly within the region once covered by the waters of the ancient glacial Lake Agassiz and except for the beach lines that mark the various stages of the lake's recession, the surface is flat, with barely perceptible depressions and low swells. Outside the basin near Rothsay the topography is a moderately rolling surface of unmodified glacial drifts, reaching elevations from 1,100 to 1,300 feet or more above sea level. The lowest point in the county is in the northwest corner, where the Red River lies about 885 <sup>feet</sup> above sea level. *altitude variation* The relief across the northern end of the county is therefore at least 300 feet, or an average of 12 feet a mile. The steepest slopes at the edge of the Lake Agassiz basin are from 15 to 20 feet a mile, whereas slopes of less than 5 feet a mile prevail in the lower parts of the basin.

The Otter Tail River enters the county from the lake district to the east and flows westward across the middle of the county to Breckenridge, where it is joined by the sluggish Bois de Sioux to form the Red River. This forms the main drainage line along the western boundary of the northern part of the county. Rabbit Creek and Deerhorn Creek, in the southern and northern parts, respectively, are the only other streams of importance. In the northeastern townships where the water level is higher there are several square miles less readily drained.

Drainage

Wilkin on the whole has better natural drainage than <sup>n</sup> some of the other counties in the Red River Valley. Much land has been



improved by the use of ditches. In 1930 there were 265.3 miles of ditches draining 253,295 acres, which were dug at <sup>a</sup> cost of \$726,639. The average cost per drained acre was \$2.87.

#### Soil

The soils are deposits from glacial drifts. In general, they are of excellent quality and well-suited to cultivation when adequately drained. The alluvial soils, covering a narrow strip near the Red River are naturally well-drained and among the most productive of the area. The black silty clay or clay loam soils underlain by a gray to drab calcareous silty clay are lake-bottom accumulations and form one of the most extensive soil types in the county.

#### Climate and Rainfall

Due to its location at the extreme southern part of the valley, Wilkin has the highest annual precipitation of the Red River counties. The greatest part of the rainfall occurs in the late spring and early summer - the time of greatest benefit to crops grown on well-drained land. On the whole, the distribution of rainfall is such that serious droughts are of rare occurrence. On the other hand the large amount of rainfall in May and early June frequently delays seeding and at times causes the poorly drained sections of the land to remain too wet for cultivation until too late in the season for crops to mature. The winters are long and cold. The soil freezes, usually, in November and remains frozen, under a cover of snow, until March or April. The farming season is short, but the cool moist spring, merging gradually into hot summer days, with 14 to 16 hours of sunshine, favors the quick growth and maturity of crops. The falls are marked by little rainfall and by cold frosty nights. In the following

table, taken from the records of the U. S. Weather Station at Campbell, will be found the temperature norms for each month of the year over a 43-year period, as well as the rainfall norms for 31 years.

CLIMATIC RECORD

MONTHS	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
TOWNS: (Camp- bell alt.675) Precipi- tation in inches	.62	.75	.98	2.00	2.90	3.77	3.16	2.95	2.62	1.80	.89	.66
Tempera- ture (Fahrenheit)	5.8	11.°	25.2°	42.8°	54.1°	64.4°	69.1°	66.6°	57.6°	44.2°	27.9°	13.2°

Annual Temperature - 40.2 degrees.  
Annual Precipitation - 23.10 inches.

SETTLEMENT AND  
RACIAL ORIGINS

Wilkin County was once known as Toombs County, named after

Robert Toombs of Georgia. Toombs planned to establish plantations in this area on the order of those operated in the South, and through his efforts the county was organized in 1858 with Breckenridge as the county seat. The outbreak of the Civil War, however, disrupted his plans, and the Indian uprising of 1862 frightened away most of the individual settlers.

In 1863, when northern sentiment was bitter towards all things souther<sup>n</sup>, the legislature changed the county's name to Andy

Johnson. In 1868 the name was again changed to Wilkin, President Johnson by this time having come into disfavor. Col. Alexander Wilkin, a courageous and able military leader, was killed in action at Tupelo, Miss., July 14, 1864.

It was not until the 1870's, when fear of the Indians subsided, that permanent settlement was renewed. A large proportion of the settlers were Europeans and by 1890 the foreign-born numbered 34.6 percent of the county's population, with Germans and Norwegians predominating. By 1930 those of foreign birth had decreased to 9.9 percent of the population, the Germans and Norwegians remaining the leading European racial groups ~~in Wilkin County.~~

COUNTY ORGANIZATION  
AND SUBDIVISIONS

Wilkin ~~County~~ represents a community which is considered

100 percent rural, <sup>as</sup> ~~in that~~ there is not a single city with a population of 2,500 in the entire county. The county in 1930 had a population of 9,791.

Incorporated towns and villages are:

Breckenridge	2,264	Kent	137
Campbell	313	Nashua	161
Doran	137	Rothsay	386
Foxhome	228	Tenney	80

Breckenridge, the county seat, is 204 miles northwest of Minneapolis. It is situated at the point where the Otter Tail River and the Bois de Sioux come together to form the Red River on its flow northward. Here are located the St. Francis Hospital, Wells Memorial Park, Bois de Sioux Country Club, and three hotels. Besides the Great Northern shops, there are 50 to 75 business units in the city.



Its population of 2,264 is by far the largest of any community in the county. It is situated on US 75, "The International Route, Winnipeg to Galveston"; State 3, paved, connects with Fergus Falls. The Northland <sup>Greyhound Lines</sup> ~~Transportation Company~~ provides daily bus service. Two railroads offer other transportation facilities; the Northern Pacific and Great Northern, the latter maintaining a division point here. The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul passes through Wahpeton, N. Dak., a sister city of Breckenridge. Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse are within easy reach of Breckenridge as are the famous lake regions of Becker, Douglas, and Otter Tail Counties.

Near Breckenridge is located the famous FEMCO FARMS, a ~~six~~ <sup>6,000-</sup> ~~thousand~~-acre area devoted to the development of choice breeds of Shropshire sheep, Holstein cattle, and Percheron horses. Femco's Holstein herd is one of the finest in the United States, and cows from this farm have won numerous prizes for butterfat production with records of more than 1,500 pounds per year.

## TAXES

From a debt standpoint, this county is in good shape. The total debt of the county and its subdivisions as of Dec. 31, 1935/ was less than half of a million. (\$340,314.69). School districts alone accounted for 56 percent of this total. A comparison of the 1931 and 1935 tax figures shows that the total property tax levy has declined 18 percent due to a decrease in taxable values from \$8,469,613 in 1931 to \$5,727,546 in 1935, although the average millage rate increased from 48.36 mills to 58.27 mills. The figures of the State tax commission for 1935 show that the percent of total indebtedness to taxable values was 5.94. This is a low figure considering that there



are only 18 of the 87 counties in the State having a ratio under 6 percent. Based upon the 1930 population of 9,791, the per capita debt of 1935 was only \$34.76, compared with a per capita debt in Hennepin of \$122.54, and Ramsey, \$184.56 or the State average of \$82.86. Of the 1934 tax levy, including special assessments (340,701), only 19.87 percent remained uncollected in 1935 while the accumulated uncollected taxes (\$254,732) represented 74 percent of a year's taxes (1935).

#### MARKETS AND TRADE CENTERS

Practically all the wheat, barley, oats, and flax marketed moves eastward through Minneapolis and Duluth. Potatoes are distributed through local dealers into Kansas and the Southwest. The early Ohio variety is marketed principally in Illinois and Iowa. Surplus livestock is forward<sup>ed</sup> directly to packing plants at Grand Forks and Fargo, N. Dak., and Fergus Falls, Minn., or shipped cooperatively to South St. Paul.

#### COOPERATIVES

It is generally true that in the counties where dairying is carried on extensively, cooperatives flourish in greater number. Although not a dairying county, Wilkin has early seen benefit in the cooperative-shipping enterprises.

Following is a list of cooperatives in the county with the location of each:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Location</u>
Red River Valley Co-op. Assn.	Potato	Rothsay
Co-op Store Company	Store	Breckenridge
Farmers' Co-op Assn.	Store	Wolverton
Farmers' Co-op Elevator Co.	Elevator	Breckenridge
Brushvale Farmers " "	"	Brushvale
Farmers' Elevator Company	"	Foxhome
" " "	"	Campbell
Kent Farmers' Elevator Co.	"	Kent
Farmers' Grain and Merc. Co.	"	Lawndale
" " " " "	"	Rothsay

<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Location</u>
Farmers' Elevator Company	Elevator	Tenney
Wolverton Elevator Company	"	Wolverton
Farmers' Livestock Shipping Assn.	Livestock	Brushwale
Farmers' " " "	"	Campbell
Foxhome Shpg. Assn.	"	Foxhome
Kent Marketing Assn.	"	Kent
Co-op Shpg. Assn.	"	Nashua
Akron Shpg. Assn.	"	Akron
Tenney Shpg. Assn.	"	Tenney
Farmers' Marketing Assn.	"	Wolverton
Lawndale Shpg. Assn.	"	Rothsay
Breckenridge Shpg. Assn.	"	Breckenridge
Farmers Co-op Creamery Co.	Creamery	Rothsay
Nashua Co-op. Creamery Assn.	"	Nashua

The independent creameries are the Twin City Creamery at Breckenridge and the Wolverton Creamery at Wolverton.

TRANSPORTATION Two federal highways (US 75 and 52) and four State highways (Nos. 3, 9, 55, and 82), with the aid of well-graveled county roads, make all parts of the county accessible to the motorists, while two railroads reach the principal towns. They are the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific. By bus the Northland <sup>Greyhound Lines</sup> ~~Transportation~~ Company gives daily service between Breckenridge and Fergus Falls while an independent line runs to Detroit Lakes. US 52 and State 3 are paved, US 75 is bituminous treated, while the other State and county roads are gravel and improved dirt.

#### SOCIAL WELFARE INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Wilkin County has a town system of poor relief. Under this system, the township board or the village council, as the case may be, is constituted the superintendent of the poor. Located at Breckenridge is the St. Francis Hospital, the only hospital in the county.

Churches

The churches of the county are divided as follows: Lutheran, <sup>five</sup> 5; Swedish Baptist, <sup>four</sup> 4; Presbyterian, <sup>two</sup> 2; Methodist Episcopal, <sup>two</sup> 2; Evangelical, <sup>one</sup> 1; Catholic, <sup>two</sup> 2; Baptist, <sup>two</sup> 2 and Congregational, <sup>two</sup> 2.

Schools

Wilkin County is divided into 60 school districts which is an average of 3.6 school districts per township. The average State aid to pupils in this county is about \$20.00. Both Wolverton and Campbell have a Class 'A' high school; Breckenridge has a Class 'B' high school; and Doran has a school with high school departments. There is an aggregated secondary (Jr. and Senior High) enrollment of about 360 pupils, while the elementary enrollment is about 1,700. Of the 76 ungraded schools only <sup>7-</sup> 15 voted a ~~seven~~-month school year.

Opportunities for higher education are available at four institutions, all within a distance of 50 miles. At Moorhead are the State Teachers' College and Concordia College, the latter a Norwegian Lutheran school. At Fargo is the North Dakota State Agricultural College, while at Wahpeton, directly across the river from Breckenridge, is the Wahpeton Science School.

## FARM INCOME

The general trend of diversification throughout the State of Minnesota is shown in the fact that 64.07 percent of the farm income for the State is derived from livestock and livestock products. This changing over from the cash-crop farming is similarly evident from the agricultural reports in Wilkin County. The 1930 census showed a total farm income for the county of \$3,022,902. Of this sum, crops produced only 38.75 percent, while livestock and livestock products produced 48.30 percent. This is significant because only three short decades ago this county depended almost entirely upon the result of its wheat crop for its income.

Segregating the income by farm types, 36.72 percent is earned by general farms; 35.23 percent by cash grain farms; 13.79 percent by animal specialty farms; 8.84 percent by dairy farms, and the remainder



by miscellaneous specialized types.

According to the U. S. Agricultural Census a statistically average farm in Wilkin will cover 332.9 acres and be valued at \$9,671, an average of \$29.05 per acre. In the barns on this farm will be some 18 head of cattle of which 11 are milk cows. There will be five head of swine, and every fifth farm will have a flock of some 36 sheep. Each farm will have 6 horses and about 100 chickens; every other farm about 10 turkeys.

Field crops on this farm will utilize the following acreage: wheat, 42 acres, principally of the spring variety; oats, 54 acres; barley, 40 acres; flax, 14 acres; and corn, 30 acres, 75 percent of which is used for fodder, the balance being harvested for grain. Every other farm will have 15 acres of potatoes, and occasionally, a crop of rye. On this farm will be 50 acres in hay and 40 acres in pasture; there will also be 30 acres in idle or fallow land. Occasional crops of vegetables and fruits will be found with the remaining land being used for building sites.

## WILKIN COUNTY AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Population, 1930 (County) -----9,791  
Area ---745 sq. mi. ----- 476,800 acres  
Population density per sq. mi. 1930 ----- 13.1 persons ]

County Seat -- Breckenridge

### FARM DEVELOPMENT

Number of Farms, 1935 ----- 1,278  
Land in Farms -----89.2% ----- 425,443 acres  
Average size of Farms ----- 332.9 acres ]

### FARM VALUES

Average value per acre, 1935 \$29.05  
" " " " 1930 \$40.90  
Average value per farm, 1935 \$9,671.00  
" " " " , 1930 \$13,804.00 .

### THE TAX PICTURE

Total Taxable Value, 1935 \$5,727,546  
Total General Tax Levy, 1935 \$336,316  
Average Tax Rate, 1935 58.27 mills ]  
  
Total Debt of County and Subdivisions \$340,314.69  
Per Capita Debt \$34.76  
County Bonds 13,908.96  
Total Debt was 5.94 of the Tax Value.  
Accumulated Taxes (Delinquent) \$254,732 [

### TENANCY AND MORTGAGE

Farm Mortgage Debt, 1930 (Farms, Operated by Owners) -- \$1,146,949  
Of the Farms operated by Owners, 63.5% were mortgaged in 1930.  
Tenants occupied 53.4% of the farms in 1935.

### FARM INCOME - 1930 Census

Average Farm Income \$2,365.00

#### Sources of Income:

Crops	38.75	Percent
Livestock sold	23.48	"
Dairying and other livestock pdcts.	24.82	"
Forest Products used	.03	"
Products used by operators' family	12.92	"
Total	100	Percent

Wilkin County

LIVESTOCK HOLDINGS - 1935

Cows 1,950 farms reported 15,261 animals over <sup>1</sup>one year old.  
Cattle and Calves of all ages -- 22,644 as reported by 1,200 farms.  
Swine -- 956 farms reported 5,972 animals which is a decrease of  
13,994 animals over 1930.  
Sheep -- 269 farms reported 9,973 animals which is an increase of 2,971  
animals over 1930 figures.

THE 1935 CROP (U. S. CENSUS)

Wheat -- 853 farms reported 257,718 bushels from 37,171 acres.  
Oats -- 778 farms reported 343,274 bushels (threshed) from 26,998 acres.  
Barley -- 693 farms reported 187,265 bushels from 19,925 acres.  
All sorghum and hay cut for forage -- 29,805 tons from 60,833 acres.  
Alfalfa -- 298 farms reported 2,489 tons from 4,705 acres.  
Rye -- 153 farms reported 22,987 bushels from 7,187 acres.  
Mixed Grain -- 15 farms reported 5,654 bushels from 457 acres.  
Flax Seed -- 399 farms reported 30,002 bushels from 11,574 acres.  
Corn harvested for grain -- 230 farms reported 31,987 bushels from 5,106 acres.  
Potatoes -- 837 farms reported 268,380 bushels from 6,018 acres.

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Recd - 5/9/36

WILKIN COUNTY

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*Section 3*

Including the Breckenridge Area

Arthur P. Foster

Federal Writing Project

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Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

TOPIC: Wilkin County, including  
the Breckenridge Area  
SUBMITTED BY: Arthur P. Foster  
NO. OF WORDS: 2,400

Wilkin County forms almost a perfect example of uniform prairie surface as the region was within the expanse of glacial Lake Agassiz. Its oceanic area of 745 square miles presents a consistent altitude of 1,000 feet with few undulations. The only variations in elevation to be detected are in the bluff-lined valleys of the main rivers; the bluffs of the Bois des Sioux, on the west, are from 20 to 40 feet high, increasing in size, from 100 to 150 feet as the river borders Traverse County, on the south, and nears its outlet from Lake Traverse. The sand and gravel beaches of Lake Agassiz rise from 3 to 10 feet above the land on the eastern part of Wilkin County, and, from 10 to 20 feet above near the western boundary.

This district is one of the few counties in northern sections of Minnesota to be without lakes on its treeless plains. Migratory waterfowl in great numbers seek the streams. The tall prairie grasses provide shelter for abundant prairie chickens, countless pheasants and some white breasted grouse. Hordes of rabbits give hunters additional sport.

A generally rich dark loam constitutes the top soil of the county, with a clay subsoil, ideal for agricultural purposes. The entire area is drained sufficiently into the Bois des Sioux and Red River by the Rabbit and Otter Tail rivers and Deerhorn Creek.

Precipitation averages approximately 21 inches annually. The growing season is about 138 days in length, controlled by a maximum, average temperature of 51°, and a minimum of 29°.

Wilkin County was originally a part of Toombs County, named in honor of Robert Toombs, a prominent citizen of Georgia. Years ago a group of Southerners were looking over the north and west with the object of finding suitable territory for the extension of slavery. The party arrive in the summer of 1856 at the point where the Otter Tail River joins the Bois des Sioux, about where the city of Breckenridge is now located. The prairies of Minnesota and Dakota seemed very suitable for future exploitation and use of slave labor. The following spring, 1857, these Southerners plotted the town of Breckenridge, so-named in memory of Colonel John C. Breckenridge, a distinguished statesman of Kentucky, who was a vice president of the United States from 1857 to 1861. During 1858 two new counties were created by the legislature in that part of the state, Toombs and Breckenridge.

The dream of establishing slavery in Minnesota was never realized. The Civil War arrived to interrupt all such plans. Settlers and their slaves were already in St. Cloud, Minnesota, awaiting the construction of dwellings in the forthcoming town of Breckenridge. They, of course, were forced to return to their homes in the south. Mr. Toombs was a supporter of the rebellion and therefore was in great disfavor in the North. In order to remove all taint of southern sympathy or respect for any one supporting the war against the Union, the state legislature, in 1861, changed the name of the county to "Andy Johnson", the former vice president. Because of his impeachment the name of the county was again changed during 1868.



Previously, in 1862, the county named Breckenridge, adjoining Toombs on the north, had been included in Clay County. The Toombs-Johnson County became Wilkin County on March 6th., 1868. This name commemorates Colonel Alexander Wilkin who was killed in action during the Civil War. He recruited the first company of soldiers of the first regiment sent from Minnesota. Colonel Wilkin had been an outstanding citizen of the state and before its admission, acting as secretary of the territory from 1851 to 1853.

Another story involving the plotting of Breckenridge concerns five St. Paul men who set out in the year 1856 to make a number of townsites along the Red River. The men making up this party were: George F. ~~XXX~~ Brett of St. Cloud and E. Demortimer and Daniel Johnson of St. Paul; <sup>Moulton</sup> ~~Moulton~~ and Prentiss were the other two members. The expedition started from St. Paul on December 31st., 1856. After a month of battling the snow and cold, the men came to the junction of the Otter Tail and Bois des Sioux rivers.

On January 30th., 1857, commenced the survey of the townsite. Four men returned to St. Paul for supplies, while the remainder stayed on until spring to protect the claims on the location. Log shanties were constructed for the long winter residence. Buffalo meat was added to the short rations to last until the men came back from St. Paul in April.

Theodore H. Barret a surveyor from St. Cloud, whom Moulton brought with him, commenced the plotting of the actual site of Breckenridge on the 23rd. of April. The work was greatly retarded because of prairie ponds, knee deep, due to the heavy spring rains. The men carried on courageously, believing that there <sup>were</sup> millions in ~~th~~ these townsites. It was commonly thought that the near-by Red River was the coming steamboat avenue between the United States and

Manitoba, besides being the main outlet for the coming farming region. The steamboat traffic materialized farther north, between Fargo and the Canadian border, on the Red River, but south of there, on the Bois des Sioux, shallow waters prevented any worthwhile development.

When the financial panic of 1857 occurred all of the above-mentioned five men left Breckenridge with the exception of Brott. He erected a building in the village that was intended to be a 150 horse power sawmill; mill machinery was strung all the way from St. Paul to Breckenridge. The sawmill was a failure, as not a single log, 16 feet long and a foot through, could be floated down the crooked, shallow Otter Tail River even in the springtime.

With the arrival of the Civil War, Brott's laborers enlisted. Barrett, the surveyor, became the colonel of a ~~black~~ colored regiment. All that the speculators had accomplished fell into ruins. However, Johnson selected 200 lots at Breckenridge as his own. They were deeded to him by Henry T. Welles, who had become the chief land owner of the town. When the railroad came it built the village so far from these lots that they, too, became valueless.

The town of Breckenridge was completely destroyed by Indians during the Sioux outbreak. Hostilities began in the Red River Valley on the 23rd. of August, 1862. About this time Government officers were on their way with a train of thirty wagons, loaded with goods, and trailed by two hundred head of cattle; their destination was the the lodges of the Red Lake Chippewas, there, to conclude a treaty. When the outbreak of the Sioux was rumored the wagon train was in the vicinity of Fort Abercrombie. On the morning of August 23rd. word was brought to the commanding officer of the Fort that a band of five hundred Sioux had crossed the Otter Tail River with the intention



of cutting off and capturing the wagons and cattle. When news of this was sent to the train, the couse was diverted toward the Fort. Messengers were also sent to Breckenridge and other settlements, urging the people to hasten to Abercrombie. The majority of the settlers were residing on the Minnesota side of the river, away from the Fort, which is in Dakota.

Several men, among them a Mr. Russell, preferred to remain in Breckenridge, taking possession of a hotel and trying to defend themselves. They were all killed. On the evening of the same day, a scouting group of six went to that village; the place was in the hands of a large number of Indians. The next day a detachment of soldiers came from Georgetown to Breckenridgg; they found the town deserted, but the bodies of three men, who had undertaken its defense, were discovered horribly mutilated. Chains had been bound upon their ankles by which to dragg them around until they were dead. An old resident, Nick Huffman, who was at the Fort during this time, relates:

"While the boys were engaged in burying the remains, they saw a person, who looked like an Indian, in the sawmill a half mile away. Rounseval, a half-breed, investigated. He found an old lady by the name of Scott, who had been living with her son. The boy was killed and her small grandson taken prisoner. Mrs. Scott had a bullet wound in her breast, but in spite of the injury, had crawled sixteen miles to the mill. She told the soldiers where they could find the body of Joe Snell, a stage driver, three miles from Breckenridge. They buried Snell and took Mrs. Scott to the Fort. On the way in the Sioux attacked them and killed the teamser, Bennett, nearly getting the wagon containing the rescued woman. However, Rounseval made a charge and brought back the team, the old lady and Bennett's body. The mail taken from the stage coach, driven by Snell,



was removed from the sacks and scattered over the prairies; much of it was gathered by a detachment under the command of Judge McCauley."

After Breckenridge was destroyed, there ~~was~~ practically no immigration to Wilkin County until the coming of the railroad. Even as late as 1880 only a small part of the county was occupied. The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (later called the Great Northern) was completed as far as Breckenridge in the fall of 1871. Among the first settlers attracted to this village by the construction of the railroad were: Edward R. Hyser and Peter Hanson. Hyser conducted a hotel in a build-  
-ing belonging to the railroad. In the early 80's, he became the proprietor of his own hotel, which, until the close of the century, was the leading hostelry in the county until destroyed by fire in 1908. Mr. Hanson was a leader in the mercantile and grain business, disposing of his general store during 1890.

With Breckenridge as the county seat located at the extreme border of a county 25 miles wide, fear was felt that the county seat might be moved to a more central place; Fergus Falls was similarly situated in the adjoining county, Otter Tail. Citizens, interested in real estate in the two counties united in the plan to transfer Range 44 of Wilkin County to Otter Tail, thus making a better balance for both counties and lessening the danger of a possible removal of county seats. This scheme was quickly passed through the legislature in the 70's and Wilkin County lost seven of its most valuable townships. An attempt was made later to regain these sections without success.

The development of Wilkin County was handicapped by further misfortunes beginning with the building of the courthouse during 1882. January 1st., 1883 was set for removing records and installing officers in the new structure. On the night before, fire broke out in the old wooden building where the records were stored, burning it to the ground

together with all the county auditor's records, including all evidence of the actual cost of the new courthouse. As a result, Wilkin County found itself, at a cost popularly believed to be \$40,000, the owner of a building valued at \$20,000. The people prepared to make up the deficit by establishing a sinking fund for the payment of bonds as they <sup>matured</sup> ~~came due~~; it was later disclosed that this money had been used for other purposes. During 1897 a movement was started to end the misuse of county moneies. Revenues were then applied to their obligations, and, in 1905, the last of the debt was paid.

Today the population of Wilkin County is 9,800. Breckenridge was incorporated as a city in 1908 and has <sup>a</sup> present census of 2,400. There are 407 pupils in the county schools and 419 children in the city schools.

The churches of Breckenridge are represented by the following denominations: Norwegian and Swedish Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist and Baptist.

Within one mile of the city is an attractive golf course of ~~nine~~ nine holes. There are public tennis courts. Water sports are confined to the broad width of the Bois des Sioux River, wherein one will find good fishing at certain seasons.

Breckenridge is 228 miles northwest of St. Paul and Minneapolis on paved US 75, "The International Route, Winnipeg to Galveston"; TH 3, also paved, unites this city with Fergus Falls. The Northland Transportation Company gives the community daily bus service. Three railroads offer other transportation facilities: The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, Northern Pacific and Great Northern, the latter maintaining a division point here. Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse are within easy reach of Breckenridge as are the famous lake regions of the northern counties. US 75 passes Abercrombie State Park (in North



Dakota) enroute north to Moorhead and Fargo, the latter cities being about 48 miles from Breckenridge.

Modern accommodations are available at the Wilkin Hotel in Breckenridge, which has 50 rooms, E., rates from \$1 to \$1.75, and the Statford Hotel, 60 rooms, E., rates \$1.25 to \$2. The Riverview Tourist Camp has sleeping and light housekeeping cabins and rooms; there are six large cabins, rates \$1.50 up per day. The Shady Oak and the Breckenridge Cabin Camp maintain attractive cabins at reasonable daily or weekly rates.

Breckenridge owes much of its prosperity to its agricultural background, one of the best in this section of the state. The chief crops are small grains, potatoes and corn. Dairy products have superseded some of the older grain ~~raising~~ productions. A co-operative creamery and co-operative livestock shipping association are successful ventures in this city. This little western Minnesota metropolis, opening into North Dakota, has a geographical advantage that has added to its consistent growth and to its welfare has acquired the importance of becoming a railroad center, an indication of permanent advancement. The eighty years of this community's history, crammed with tribulations, has never discouraged the fulfillment of its ultimate, successful future.



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