



## Frances Densmore Papers

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Reminiscences by Mr. Henry P.  
McIntire, Read before the Goodhue  
County Historical Society, January  
6, 1927

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I arrived in Red Wing on May 1st, 1856, on the Steamer Alhambra. I was 12 years old at the time and my brother Fred was younger. Father went right into the business of keeping a general store, about where Dahl's Auto Livery is. The store was McIntire and Sheldon and both families <sup>lived</sup> upstairs. Across the street was a general store kept by a lame man named Jackson. He was a Methodist and went to Pine Island afterward. There were some other stores when we came. H. L. Bevans had a store on Main Street where Schacht and Erickson are. A drug store kept by Brand--a brother-in-law of Mrs. Ford Smith--stood about where the Fitzsimmons store is, and Ira Kellogg had a drug store along there. Brow, Betcher and Ashton had a hardware store on the west side of Broadway and there were dwelling houses on the east side of Broadway. There were no trees in the town.

Of course the place was mostly Indians,--there must have been about 2000 Indians and only 200 or 300 white people. I used to ride in the canoes with the squaws and play cards with the Indians in the teepees. The Indians were at the store the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. They used to have great dances in the middle of Main Street, in front of where Schacht and Erickson are now. They used to have begging dances, about 30 Indians dancing around in a circle; and then they would all go off and beg for food. I remember a regular war dance they had there

in 1858 or 1859. Some Sioux came back with Chippewa scalps on barrel hoops and did a war dance there, and then they went up to the mouth of Hay Creek and danced about a week.

The Indians didn't camp all the time in one place. Sometimes they were over on the island or on Hay creek, and they went to the woods in winter. They used to have a big camp in Burnside, below where the German cemetery is, and back of the Sargent farm. I saw that camp many a time. Around where we live now--here on Fourth Street, was a big Indian cornfield, and there was a mound in front of the T. B. Sheldon place, where Nilan's live now. There were bodies on scaffolds and also some burial mounds on College Bluff but the big burying ground was where the Malt House stands. That was quite a hill, and when they graded it down for Main Street they opened ever so many graves and found that big medal that Frank Sterett had so long.

I remember that once the Sioux had a camp between the two channels of the river--down by Wacouta. They had fattened a dog and they killed and boiled it with Indian corn and had a big feast. We all went down--father and mother and Fred and I. The Indians didn't offer us any dog but we saw it eaten.

The "red school-house" was in use, but after 1859 I was going to a private school kept by Martha Densmore in the Densmore homestead, where Wm. Seiz lives now. She had a little school of not more than a dozen pupils.

In 1861 father and Mr. Sheldon sold their store to Mr. Simmons and we moved over to where the Metro Theater is now. There were quite a few houses around there at that time, though a good many people still lived above the stores.

Land was \$1.25 an acre and people bought it from the

Gov't thought Judge Welsh.

The old Freeborn House was where the La Grange Mill stands, it was the best house here for a long time, and later was moved down on Fifth Street and made into a church--I think it is the Swede Baptist Church. Henry Freeborn was a real estate and speculator and was a rich man for those times. He and Dr. Sweeney and Potter owned the Red Wing Townsite. Potter lived down at Wacouta, and the Potter crowd wanted the Red Wing crowd to move down to the head of the lake, but Sweeney and Freeborn wanted to stay up here. Potter built a steamboat named the Comet that ran on the lake.

Of course the boats carried the mail and express in summer, and they ran pretty regularly from the middle of April to the middle of November if the river was open. Then we had a little ferry that ran up to Trenton--a barge and a steamboat. Later we had a rope ferry across each channel of the Mississippi.

In winter we had a stage running every day--one stage each way, and if there was too much express for the stage it was carried by wagon. J. C. Burbank had the stage line, and he had good Concord stages holding four or five passengers with a place behind for the baggage. The stage was on wheels or runners according to the roads, and the drivers were Cotter and Jim Hawes. They changed horses at Lake City and probably at Hastings. The road was the same that the autos go on now. The express office was in Blodgett and Sheldon's warehouse which is still used as a warehouse by the La Grange Mill. Meserole and McLaren had a warehouse beyond that, but it burned down two years ago.

At first the stage had to come up from Galena, then there was a bridge at Prairie du Chien so they could get across the river there, and of course they crossed down at La Crosse after that bridge was build.

The stages stopped in front of the Metropolitan Hotel and the boats landed back of it. When the water was high they put the plank from the boat to the steps of the hotel. I embarked there when I went to war, and got off there when we came back. I served in Co. G of the 7th Minnesota, and went up to Fort Snelling on the War Eagle to enlist.

It was in August 1865 that we came back. The 7th and 10th Minnesota each had a company from Red Wing and both were landed here before being taken up to the Fort. One came in the morning and the other in the evening. Somebody was stationed on top of Barn Bluff to watch when the boat came through the lake, then they gave the signal and the church bells rang and everybody went down to meet the boat. Everybody had baked, and the tables were set outdoors, in front of the hotel. Of course all the girls were out. After the men had had a good meal they got back on the boat and went to the Fort to be mustered out.

Red Wing was a nice, lively little town in those days. We got our mail and express regularly and business was good.

I do not remember hearing an Indian named Red Wing mentioned in those days, except that he was said to be buried on top of Barn Bluff. Some of use dug down 6 or 8 feet but could not find any bones. The real chief was Wabasha, who lived down the river.