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"Organization of Counties as State

Expanded after 1849

"The first Legislature of Minnesota which commenced its session in September, 1849, divided the State into the following counties:

Washington, Ramsey, Benton and Itasca, out of the east side of the Mississippi; Wabasha, Dakota, Wahnata, Mahkato and Pembina of the west side forming large belts of territory, extending from the Mississippi westward to the Missouri.

In 1851, Chisago county was formed from Washington county. Cass and Pembina absorbed the former subdivision of Wahnata and Mahkato.  
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1849 - One County, St. Croix, organized.

1850 - Nine Counties, Washington, Ramsey and Benton organized; Itasca, Dakota, Wahnatah, Mahkato, Wabashaw and Pembina, unorganized.

1851 - Nine counties, Washington, Ramsey and Benton organized; Dakota, Itasca, Cass, Pembina, Chisago and Wabashaw unorganized.

1852 - Ten counties, Ramsey, Washington, Benton, Chisago and Hennepin, organized; Dakota, Itasca, Pembina, Cass, and Wabashaw unorganized.

1853 - Eighteen counties, The five organized counties above named, also Dakota, Wabashaw, Fillmore, Scott, Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Nicollet and Pembina, organized; thirteen organized in all. And Pierce, Sibley, Rice Goodhue and Itasca unorganized.

1854 - Twenty-one counties, eighteen organized; including with those last given, the new counties of Houston and Winona, also Sibley and Rice and Goodhue, organized, and five unorganized, as above.

1855 - Thirty-six counties, twenty two organized, viz: Ramsey, Benton, Washington, Chisago, Hennepin, Dakota, Wabashaw, Fillmore, Scott, Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Nicollet, Stearns, Carver, Wright, Houston, Winona, Sibley, Rice, Goodhue and Pembina, and fourteen unorganized, viz: Olmsted, Dodge, Mower, Freeborn, Faribault, Steele, Renville, Davis, Brown, Todd, Pierce, Itasca, St. Louis and Newton.

1856 - Forty-two counties. Thirty-four organized including those last named; and Todd, Faribault, Mower, Morrison, Sherburne, Brown, St. Louis, McLeod, Meeker, Olmsted, Dodge, and Steele, also Pine and Lake established this year (1858), and unorganized.

1857 - Sixty counties. The new counties being Isanti, Itasca, Aitkin, Mille Lac, Buchanan, Carlton, Crow Wing, Martin, Jackson, Nobles, Big Sioux, Manomin, Anoka organized; also, Freeborn, Pine and Itasca, organized, making fifty organized counties in all, and thirteen unorganized counties, including the new counties; Pipestone, Cottonwood, Murray, Rock, Medway, and the old counties of Renville, Davis, St. Louis and Newton.

St. Paul Pub. Lib.

10-18-38

"Derivation of Names of Counties in Minnesota"

From the Glencoe Register:

Anoka County got its name from the village at the junction of Rum River and Mississippi. (name is Indian meaning('Town on both sides of the river')).

Aitkin from an old trader, a Scotchman, William A. Aitkin.

Blue Earth from a stream that empties into the Minnesota River.

Benton, named after Thomas H. Benton the great Missourian.

Brown, named after Hon. J. R. Brown, Sioux Agent in 1858 - came into the Territory in 1849.

Buchanan, from the President 1856-1860.

Breckenridge, from Vice President of U. S. A. in 1853.

Cass, from General Lewis Cass, Secretary of State under Buchanan.

Chisago, from Chisago Lake.

Chippewa,

Carlton, from Senator Carlton.

Cottonwood, from the Cottonwood River.

Crow Wing, from the River of that name.

Dodge, got its name from Hon. Henry Dodge, first Governor of the Territory of Wisconsin.

Dakota,

Davis, from Hon. William B. Davis of Belle Plaine, a former member of the Legislature.

Douglas, after Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.

Faribault, was named in honor of John Baptiste Faribault, a pioneer trader from Canada, who settled near Mendota, in 1804 and visited Minnesota as early in 1798.

Fillmore, from President Millard Fillmore.

Freeborn, from Hon. William Freeborn, also a member of the Legislature from Goodhue County.

Goodhue, from the lamented James M. Goodhue, the pioneer editor.

Hennepin, in honor of Father Louis Hennepin, a missionary, the first white man who first saw and named the Falls of St. Anthony in 1680.

Houston, took its name from General Sam. Houston of Texas.

Isanti, from Lake Isanti.

Itaska, from a village on the Mississippi, above Anoka. (Really from two Latin words Veritas-Caput, Truth-Head. Referring to true head of Mississippi River in Itasca county.)

Jackson, from Henry Jackson, the founder of St. Paul and a member of the Territorial Legislature.

Kandiyohi, from the Lake of that name, which signifies the place where buffalo fish are made.

Kanabec, Chippewa word the definition of which we do not now remember. (From Minnesota History - means The Long Lake from Moose Lake.)

Le Sueur, from Le Sueur, a Frenchman who explored the Minnesota River, as far up as Mankato in 1699 or 1670.

McLeod, from the honorable Martin McLeod of Oak Grove, long a prominent and valuable member of the Legislature.

Mower, from Hon. John E. Mower a farmer member of the Legislature, from Washington County.

Monogalia, is borrowed from Virginia, the first settlers in this county were from Morgantown, Virginia, and they named the county after their old home.

Monroe, from the President of that name.

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Morrison, from Hon. Allan Morrison, an Indian trader and a member of Territorial Legislature.

Meeker, from the Honorable Bradley B. Meeker, one of the first judges of the Supreme Court of the Territory.

Murray, from Hon. William <sup>P?</sup> Murray of St. Paul, a pioneer lawyer and an almost continual member of the Legislature from the time of his advent into Minnesota.

Nicollet, from a Frenchman, sent out from Quebec in 1639, to Wisconsin, as an ambassador to make a treaty with the Indians.

Nobles, from Hon. William H. Nobles, a member of the Legislature, and an early pioneer who made the discovery of Nobles, Pass over the Rocky mountain.

Olmsted, from the two Olmsteds, Hon. David and Hon. S. B. Dodge.

Ottertail, from Lake of same name.

Pipestone, from the celebrated quarry of that name, where the material of the red piper of the Sioux is obtained.

Pine, in consequence of the Pine that exists in that county.

Polk, from the President - James K. Polk.

Ramsey, was named after the first Territorial Governor, Hon. Alexander Ramsey.

Renville, from a 'Bois Brule' (of that name) who was born near the Kaposin village of the Sioux.

Rice, from Hon. Henry M. Rice.

Rock, from Augustine Rock, an Indian trader.

Scott, from the Generalissimo of the U. S. army, Winfield Scott.

Sibley, from the Hon. H. H. Sibley first delegate to Congress from the Territory and first Governor of the State.

Steele, from Franklin Steele, Esq. of Fort Snelling who built the first house in the limits of this State, as a private citizen.

Sherburne, from Judge M. Sherburne of the Supreme Territorial Court.

St. Louis, from the River St. Louis.

Stearns, from Hon. Charles T. Stearns, of St. Cloud, a member of the old Territorial Legislature.

Toombs, from Senator Robert Toombs of Georgia.

Todd, from Captain Todd, Company A. Sixth Infantry, long the commanding officer of Fort Ripley.

Wabashaw, (Wabasha) a Sioux Chief.

Waseca, a combination of the Sioux words we believe, red earth, or something of that kind.

Winona, the first born female of the Sioux; this was the name of the maiden who took the terrible leap from the Rock (Maiden Rock) which overhangs Lake Pepin.

Wright, from Governor Silas Wright of New York.

SESSION LAWS - Extra Session of Legislature.

1857.

Page 52.  
Chap. V.

Act to establish the Boundaries of Certain Counties and for other purposes.

- Sec. 1. Defines boundary lines Mille Lacs county, temporary county seat at Hanover.
- Sec. 2. Defines boundary lines Buchanan county, temporary county seat at Fortuna.
- Sec. 3. Defines boundary lines Carlton County, temporary county seat at Twin Lakes.
- Page 53 Sec. 4. Defines boundary lines Crow Wing county, temporary county seat at Crow Wing.
- Sec. 5. Defines boundary lines Aiken county, temporary county seat at Lankiagun.
- Aiken Crow Wing and Mille Lac are hereby attached to the second judicial district.

APPROVED May 23, 1857.

Page 66.  
Chap. XIV.

Acto to establish certain counties and for other purposes.

- Sec. 1. Defines boundary lines of Martin county.
- Sec. 2. Defines boundary lines of Jackson county.
- Sec. 3. Defines boundary lines of Nobles county.
- Sec. 4. Defines boundary lines of Pipe Stone county.
- Sec. 5. Defines boundary lines of Big Sioux county.
- Sec. 6. The said counties of Martin, Jackson, Nobles and Big Sioux are hereby declared to be organized counties and invested with all the immunities to which all organized counties are entitled by law in the Territory. Said counties shall be attached to the Third Judicial District and to the tenth council district for elective purposes.
- Sec. 7. Defines boundary lines of Cottonwood County.
- Sec. 8. Defines boundary lines of Murray County.
- Sec. 9. Defines boundary lines of Rock county.
- Sec. 10. Defines boundary lines of Medway county.
- Sec. 11. Three commissioners, appointed by the Governor, for each of said counties...said board shall have power to appoint all other officers that may be required to complete the organization of their respective counties.
- Sec. 14. County of Pipe Stone shall be attached to county of Bid Sioux and the county of Rock shall be attached to the county of Murray for all judicial and elective purposes.

APPROVED May 23, 1857.

P. 71.  
Chap. XVI.

An act to define boundaries between counties of Rice and Dakota.

- Sec. 1. Defines new area to annex, as above.
- Sec. 2. Effective on passage.

APPROVED May 22, 1857.

SESSION LAWS - 1857, continued.

P. 309.

Chap. LXXXIII.

An act for an act relating to District Courts and for other purposes.

Sec. 6. The counties of Mower, Faribault and Freeborn are hereby made a part of the 3rd Judicial District and the Judge of said District is authorized to hold terms of the District Court in each of said counties. The Judges of the District Court shall, as soon as practicable after the passage of this act, appoint a Clerk of the District Court in each of the organized counties of the respective Districts.

Sec. 8. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

APPROVED May 23, 1857.

P. 316.

Chap. LXXXVIII

An act to annex a portion of Mower to the county of Olmsted.

Sec. 1. That Sections 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, in each township No. 104 North, of Ranges 14 and 15, are hereby detached from the county of Mower and attached to the county of Olmsted.

Sec. 2. Effective at passage.

APPROVED May 26, 1857.

Ed Ingalls.