

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

June 2018

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Chaska Brick

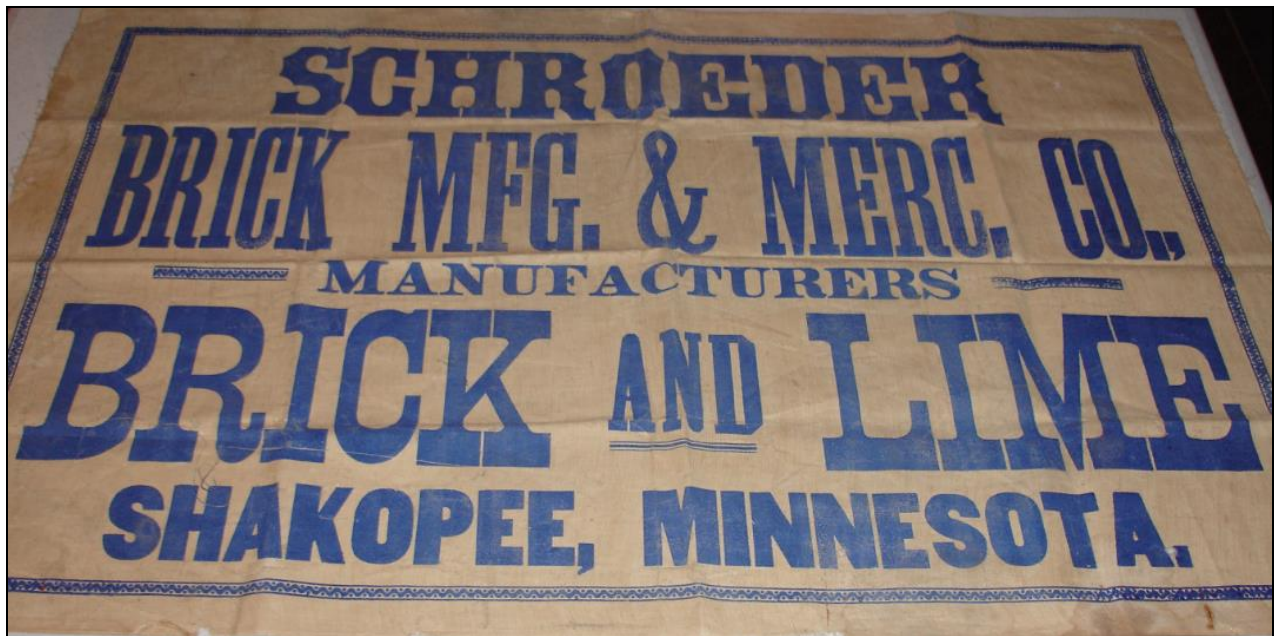
Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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1. What's New?

- In my research, I continually come across interesting or funny stories from the old days. I have added a news nugget to showcase these. This segment can be found on page 9 of this issue.
- I have done a lot of updates to www.chaskabrick.com. The home page was freshened up and additional historical content was added. Check it out!
- If you want to sign up to automatically receive this newsletter, you can do so at www.mnbricks.com
- I know there are a lot of history buffs out there. If you have information on bricks or brickyards, I would love to hear about it. If you have old historical photographs you would like to share, those are also great conversation pieces too.

**SHARE INFORMATION
& OLD
PHOTOGRAPHS!**



2. Photo of the Month



St. Paul Levee

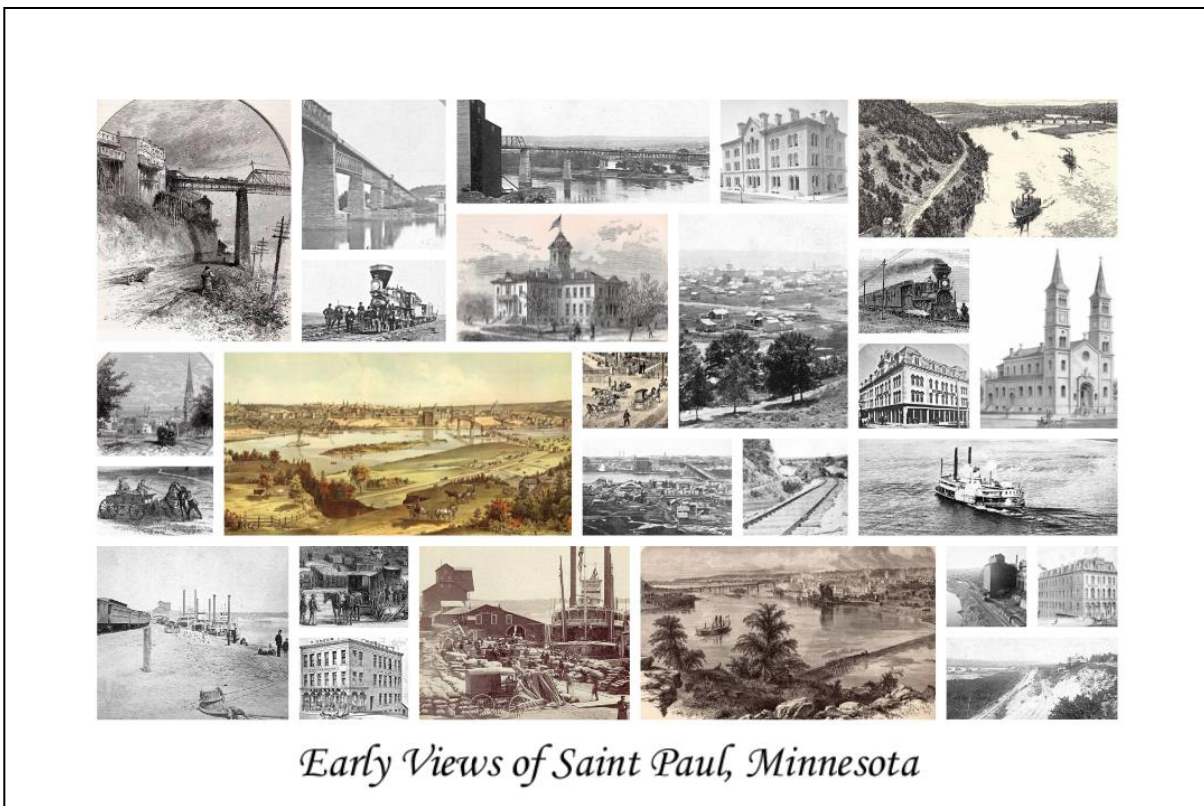
This portion of an 1870s stereoview from my collection shows several steamboats moored along the St. Paul levee. The steamboat at the left says "Stella" on the side of the cabin. If you look closely between the two smokestacks on the Stella, you can see a mounted set of elk antlers. In the back right, the St. Paul wagon bridge is visible, which stretches across the Mississippi River. Finally, in the forefront, there are bags of grain stacked beneath tarps. This is how the Minnesota grain crop was hauled to market before the advent of the railroads.

3. For Sale

Do you ever wonder what some of the early cities in Minnesota looked like over a hundred years ago?

Shown below is a 20 x 30 inch collage poster showing some of the early views of St. Paul, Minnesota. You can purchase it on the “shop” page of my website, www.mnbricks.com.

On the same page mentioned above, there are other posters for sale on various brick towns, the historic Minnesota River Valley churches, and the Minnesota Winter of 1880-81.



4. Word Search

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA BRICK

V R M T L K L M G S L S L H N N M W B E R L J U C B B Q S Y
L Z A V O C C K W O K O A E M J B T P V N L A U F L X H D E
D E E I K P A I W Q T R T I Z D C G D E U I G U F U Q J L S
J N C D L T E E R I D W O Z N L H K Y W P H G E U E S J G M
Q L I F L R R D P B I B N W U T Q E L H S J E L L L L K D A
U K H D A L O A N N E K T X Y K P T I S C S R K B I E C L R
W F U Y E U C A C O S L Z T C A U A Q L V E B J S M V P P R
N F I V Y E A I D M I K L I H U L Y U T E M R P N E N M W E
U B E U T M T P Z H F N R I Y L C C D L P A I O O S R P W D
A E T A H Y F R S W U B U K Z S E I G W B J C D T T Y Y I N
W M T F B A S M A Q E B V L J A Y I E N Y R K I Y O E T E A
Y S J R R T H P M T B J O B E Z B F C K I M I I A N Z F U X
R E I R R A C Y T I V A R G S W E H T A M N J C D E F T W E
M C D D A N I E L F B R A W L E Y K R V B Z R H K F J S I L
K X G S P O U H E N R Y H S I B L E Y H W W V O L P E S O A
C C M R Y O N S T O J R X H T V N Q Q S R R A C C E T H A I
L A U J N S O L U L O B I C Z X V S B E O Z X T T X Z H H I
B M U A X I S V K E G D I R B A H S A B A W X Z P C H R J M
I F L U E M M C D A Q N H T I D X Y U U W K R O Q Y Q C X Y
R K D K C I R B T S R I F F F W P H V R O S S P J F Y T R L

ALEXANDER RAMSEY
BAZILLE BRICK
BLUE LIMESTONE
CORNING CLAY WORKS
DANIEL F BRAWLEY

DAYTONS BLUFF
FIRST BRICK
HENRY H SIBLEY
JAGGER BRICK
JAMES J HILL

LANOQUETTE BRICK
LOWER LEVEE
MATHEWS GRAVITY CARRIER
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
RAILROAD HUB

SAINT PAUL BRICK
STATE CAPITOL
TWIN CITY BRICK
UNION DEPOT
WABASHA BRIDGE

5. A Look Back

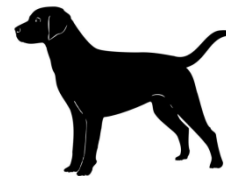
HUNTING IN THE OLD DAYS

MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT

On my arrival at Fort Snelling in 1849 I found Lieut. Anderson D. Nelson at the post, and being the only unmarried officer in the garrison, he had a mess of his own, which he invited me to join. I was glad enough to do so, for there was no eating house nearer than St. Paul, and the distance was too great to go for my meals. Nelson was fond of shooting, and had supplied himself with two dogs and any number of shotguns. He kept the table well supplied with game, which at that time could be obtained within a mile or so of the post. At the first dinner I took with him there were two large, nicely roasted, mallard ducks brought in and placed before him and he said to me, "Johnson, are you fond of duck?" I replied "yes," whereupon he placed the fork through the breast of one and the carving knife under it and placed the entire bird on my plate. I confess it caused me to open my eyes in contemplating Northwestern hospitality. We continued to keep house together for some weeks, when he was ordered to St. Louis and I was left alone. When he was ready to leave he left in my care and keeping a pony and two well-broken dogs, Crapo and Argus by name.

I had never had the opportunity of bird shooting, was without a gun, and in fact had little taste for field sports, but with two good dogs and prairie chickens everywhere, it occurred to me one day to give the dogs exercise, so I took a government musket, loaded it with shot and started out. I shall never forget the apparent joy of the dogs as they moved out ahead of me. I suppose they imagined that they were followed by a man well equipped for bird shooting. I noticed that after going over the ground in front of them, when they found themselves far in advance of me, they would seemingly slacken their gait until I came up to them. Soon after crossing the creek above Minnehaha Falls both came to a dead point. I cocked the old musket and brought it into position and bade the dogs "hie on." Two birds arose, flying about eight feet apart. I shot at one and killed the other, and from that day to the present time I have never practiced at shooting on the wing. I bagged my bird and returned to the garrison, but was always particular not to tell the officers just how I had killed my first and last prairie chicken... R. W. Johnson (*The Saint Paul Daily Globe*, Sunday, February 21, 1892, Page 8)

Who was R. W. Johnson?
See next page...



Gen. Johnson arrived in St. Paul in 1849 on a river packet. He had heard wonderful stories about St. Paul in eastern newspapers and expected to find a great city. He found 400 people living in log houses. The whole country was still very wild. Gen. Johnson often saw deer and game of all kinds. One of the soldiers at the fort killed 1,780 prairie chickens in 3 years. (*The Minneapolis Tribune*, Tuesday, March 9, 1897, Page 2)

The beautiful post with its handsome quarters, wide avenues and parades, are in existence largely through the efforts of Alexander Ramsey, who became secretary of war. Mrs. Charlotte Van Cleve, whose early days are closely connected with the history of the state, also figured in the history of Snelling, and the aged lady was very feelingly referred to by the speaker (Johnson). It was at Snelling that Gen. Johnson first felt the responsibilities of young manhood and his recollections of the post are very dear. (*The Saint Paul Globe*, Tuesday, March 9, 1897, Page 4)

Richard Washington Johnson was born in Livingston county, Kentucky, Feb. 7, 1827, and died at St. Paul, Minn., April 21, 1897. He has been connected with the regular army of the United States since 1844, when he entered the military academy at West Point, from which he graduated July 1, 1849, when he was appointed brevet second lieutenant and assigned to duty in the Sixth regiment of infantry. On June 10, 1850, he was promoted to be second lieutenant of the First regiment of infantry, of which regiment he was made adjutant March 3, 1853, and discharged the duties of that position until March 3, 1855, when he was appointed regimental quartermaster of the Second cavalry, which position he held until Sept. 30, 1856. He was appointed first lieutenant of the Second regiment of cavalry March 3, 1855. On Dec. 3, 1856, he was promoted to captain of Company F of that regiment, which rank he held at the commencement of the War of the Rebellion.

On July 17, 1862, he was promoted to the rank of major of the Fourth cavalry. Oct. 11, 1861, he was promoted to brevet major general of volunteers, and was honorably mustered out of the volunteer service Jan. 15, 1866, and retired with the rank of brigadier general March 3, 1875, which rank he held at the time of his death. During the twelve years that intervened between the date of his graduation at West Point, and 1861, when the War of the Rebellion commenced, the United States had been engaged in no general war, and his services had been of that class then generally, and now to some extent, required of all the young officers on the frontier – scouting in the Indian country, pursuing and capturing small detachments of Indians, performing important staff duty, maintaining discipline and promoting the efficiency of the commands to which they are attached.

Of such service it is sufficient to say that it was discharged to the entire satisfaction of his regular officers and of the government. Manhood and loyalty to government were never put to a severer test than in the case of the soldiers and even the loyal citizens of the Southern states at the time of the breaking out of the rebellion. All the attractions and sentiment which spring from home, childhood, kindred, friends and state pride, appealed to men to remain true to the state of their birth, and the apparent interests of their kindred and section. While but a single voice, and this oftentimes uttered with feeble tone, called men to remain true to that government, whose dominion extended over all states and all interests. Our deceased comrade had no hesitation in deciding at once what the highest duty required of him, or as to which should have the weight of his influence, and the advantages of any service that it was in his power to render.

When many members of his class at West Point were resigning from the army for the sole purpose of taking up arms against the government, and when the conduct of many others was such that even Mr. Lincoln, with all his tact and skill, was unable to determine who of said officers would stand by him and who would turn against him, never had occasion to give a moment's thought as to where our comrade stood, and hence he early felt the arm of this great president leaning upon him for support. Long before Aug. 11, 1861, the date of his promotion to brigadier general, he was in command of the Home Guards of Louisville, and other irregular troops, maneuvering to check the advance of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnson across the Ohio. He commanded a brigade in the siege of Corinth, a division at the battles of Stone River, Liberty Gap, Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Resaca, New Hope Church, and in the marches and skirmishes preceding the battle of Atlanta, and a division of cavalry at the battle of Nashville. (*The Saint Paul Globe*, Saturday, April 24, 1897, Page 3)



Nugget from the late 1800s

A small porker was picked up by the cow catcher of the locomotive of the passenger train, on Monday afternoon, about a mile west of Lewiston. On reaching the station the trainmen proceeded to the front to unload "porky," when, to their astonishment, he was found alive and kicking, and, on being placed on his native earth, ran off, with his head and tail wagging as briskly as ever. If all locomotives were as skillfully managed as that, there would be less dead live-stock returned on the expense bills against the companies. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Tuesday, February 20, 1872, Page 3)

6. Brick Structure of the Month



ST. PETER INSANE ASYLUM

Building projects for the State of Minnesota fueled some of the early brickyards. One state project, a place to house people with mental challenges, was built at St. Peter, Minnesota. The image shown below is from the 1874 Andreas Atlas of Minnesota.



The St. Peter complex was built using a combination of wood, brick, and stone. The articles that follow give some history on the project, the builders, the time line, and where the building materials came from.

The Commissioners who are to locate the State Insane Hospital propose to enter upon that duty next week. They will meet at Owatonna, proceed thence to St. Paul and up the Minnesota Valley as far as Mankato. Returning to St. Paul, they will visit the river towns down to Winona, and go from there to Rochester and Mantorville. They desire that towns which desire the location should be prepared to show the most eligible sites for the institution and be prepared to offer the twenty acres of land that the law requires should be donated. It is desirable that a tract large enough for a farm should be secured for the Hospital. It is usual to have a farm in connection with institutions of this kind. (*The Saint Paul Daily Press*, Wednesday, April 11, 1866, Page 4)

We learn that the Insane Asylum has been located by the Commissioners at St. Peter, the people of that place having offered a seven thousand dollar farm as its site as an inducement for its location there. (*Hastings Independent*. (*Chatfield Democrat*, Saturday, June 9, 1866, Page 2)

Within half a mile of the farm there is a quarry of building stone of good quality, and the same formation of rock is continuous through the hospital site, and no doubt good quarries could be opened upon the farm. There is upon the land good clay for brick – a brick yard having been formerly carried on upon it. (*The Saint Paul Press*, Tuesday, July 3, 1866, Page 1)

The St. Peter *Tribune* says that the citizens of that place have already subscribed and paid in the entire sum of \$7,000 required for the purchase of the Dorrington farm for the presentation to the State of Minnesota for the Insane Asylum purposes. (*The Saint Paul Press*, Friday, September 7, 1866, Page 4)

The St. Peter *Tribune* says the plans for the permanent buildings for the State Insane Asylum drawn by Mr. Sloan, of Philadelphia, have been submitted to the Board of Trustees and unanimously adopted. It was further decided to begin the work upon the foundations of the permanent structure at once, in order to have that portion completed before winter. (*Taylor's Falls Reporter*, Saturday, July 27, 1867, Page 1)

The structure is to consist of a main central building of sixty feet front and one hundred and twenty feet deep, with wings or sections on each side, each section as added receding from the front of the previous one. These sections are each to be about one hundred and twenty feet in length, and are to be added as the wants of the institution and the number of patients demand. The foundation of the main building and of a section on each side has been laid. The future progress of the work will depend upon the action of the Legislature the coming season. (*Chatfield Democrat*, Saturday, December 21, 1867, Page 3)

Mr. Ash, of Le Sueur, has received the contract for making brick for the insane asylum at St. Peter. (*Minneapolis Daily Tribune*, Tuesday, April 7, 1868, Page 2)

Snyder & Damren of St. Peter, awarded contract for building Insane Asylum at that place. Amount \$11,902. Stone and mason work done by day labor. (*Wabasha Weekly Herald*, Thursday, May 21, 1868, Page 2)

The stone work on the insane asylum building at St. Peter is nearly completed. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Wednesday, September 30, 1868, Page 2)

The party proceeded thence to the new Asylum building, about one mile above the city, after examining which, they sat down to a bountiful dinner provided by the citizens. The completion of the central building is strongly urged the coming season, the cost of which will be \$56,000; also that the other wing to be erected as soon as possible, that the female patients may be transferred to more suitable quarters. This section it is estimated will cost \$140,000. (*Mower County Register*, Austin, Minnesota, Thursday, February 10, 1870, Page 2)

The asylum is supplied by a large and beautiful spring of pure water, the stone is found within a stone's throw of the building, and wood is convenient. It is surrounded by a farm of more than three hundred acres. (*The Rochester Post*, Saturday, February 12, 1870, Page 2)

The contract for the carpenter work on the extension of the State Insane Asylum, at St. Peter, has been awarded to A. W. Gage & Co., of Winona, and for the mason work to Matt, Breen & Co., of St. Paul. (*The Saint Cloud Journal*, Thursday, April 20, 1871, Page 3)

There is no better or handsomer building material in the State than the blue limestone that is quarried within the limits of our city, and of which Old's & Fishback's Mill, and the Catholic Church, of this city, are both built; the latter is a building that is not surpassed in the beauty of the stone in its walls by any building in the State. The stone we refer to is very much the same in appearance as that of which the Deaf and Dumb Institute, at Faribault, and the best buildings of St. Paul are built, and is far handsomer than the Mantorville stone or the brown stone of which the Insane Asylum, at St. Peter, is built. (*The Rochester Post*, Saturday, February 22, 1873, Page 3)

Mr. Bohn's ability as a contractor is well known in this city, where he has resided for the past fifteen years. He built the Normal School and the High School buildings in this city, both of which are fine and substantial pieces of work. In the contract for the Insane Asylum he will have to use about 300,000 feet of lumber, which will be furnished by the dealers of Winona if their prices are favorable. All the carpenter work, doors, sash, mouldings, flooring, etc., will be done at Mr. Bohn's manufacturing establishment in this city. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Saturday, April 12, 1873, Page 3)

The contract for constructing the main building and one return wing of the Minnesota Insane Asylum at St. Peter, has been awarded to Mr. Conrad Bohn, of Winona for the sum of \$121,950.30. (*The Minnesota Record*, Rochester, Minnesota, Saturday, April 26, 1873, Page 2)

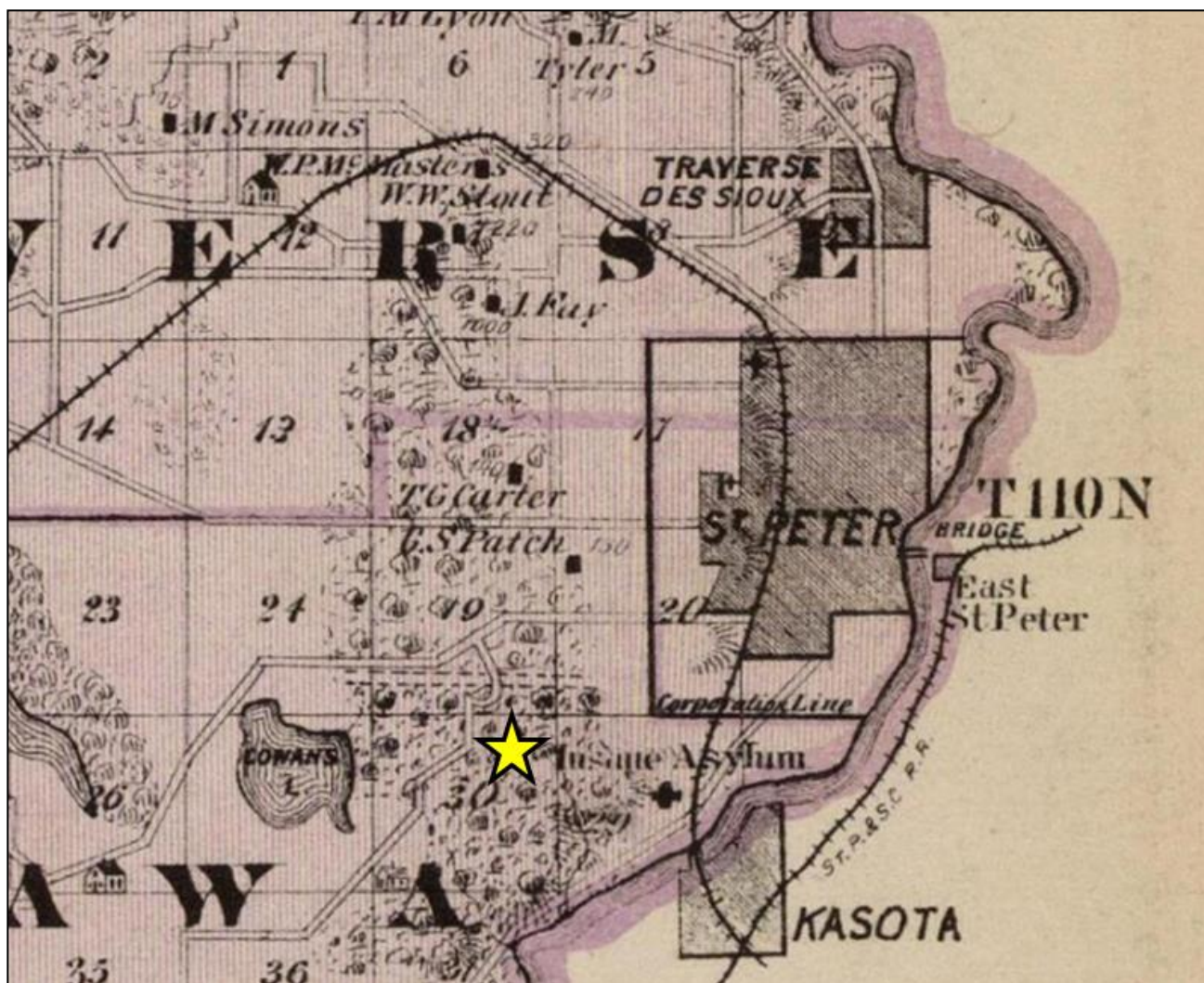
Mr. Charles Butler, of Winona, has taken the contract of Mr. C. Bohn for all the mason work on the State Insane Asylum for \$61,000. Mr. Butler has recently finished the brick and mason work on the new car shops of the Winona and St. Peter railroad in this city. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Tuesday, May 6, 1873, Page 3)

Wanted – Stone Cutters to work at St. Peter, Minn., on the Insane Asylum. Employment given all Summer. Half fare tickets will be given from Winona. Liberal wages will be paid. Chas. Butler, Winona, Minn., or at the work in St. Peter. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Tuesday, June 10, 1873, Page 3)

Mr. Charles Butler was in town, to-day, to get hoisting apparatus for handling the heavy stone on the Insane Asylum. He has about a hundred and twenty men employed and the work is progressing finely. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Monday, August 11, 1873, Page 3)

The grant of \$100,000 given by the Legislature last winter, has been appropriated to the construction of the centre building (occupied by the administration of the hospital) and the south wing and return part of which, now complete, is occupied by 100 female patients. The remainder will be done in August... (*Chatfield Democrat*, Saturday, February 7, 1874, Page 2)

The contract for building the additions to the hospital of the Insane Asylum at St. Peter, was yesterday awarded to Breen & Young, of St. Paul, for \$38,950. (*Minneapolis Daily Tribune*, Wednesday, April 15, 1874, Page 1)



Location of the St. Peter Asylum from the 1874 Andreas Atlas of Minnesota