

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

December 2018

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Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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Contents

1. What's New?	3
2. Photo of the Month	4
3. For Sale	5
4. A Look Back	6
5. News Nuggets	8
6. Brick Structure of the Month	10



Cornerstone ceremonies were important in the old days. The whole town would come out to watch the laying of the cornerstone. This postcard was from Hiram, Iowa.

1. What's New?

- I continue to beef up my Brickipedia section devoted to large brick contracts in early Minnesota. It is fascinating how many state sponsored institutions were built. Did you know there was a state home for children of deceased Civil War veterans? I am working to add this and multiple other buildings to www.mnbricks.com/brickipedia
- I have produced two historical You Tube videos. The first is about the celebrations in the Twin Cities during the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883. I just finished a second video on Lucius Howe, the first brickmaker of Chaska, Minnesota. I am trying to make history fun, combining historical tidbits with audio and video. Check them out at www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos
- I received a lot of information from a contact about the Pelican Rapids brickyards. This is very helpful to me! I always appreciate hearing from people.
- I had a contact requesting a brick from Springfield, Minnesota. These are fairly hard to come by, but I can tell you what I know.
- I removed the word search this month. I am not sure anyone likes this feature, and it takes me the longest to do.
- If you want to sign up to automatically receive this newsletter, you can do so at www.mnbricks.com



**SHARE INFORMATION
& OLD
PHOTOGRAPHS!**

2. Photo of the Month



Constructing a Brick Building

Have you ever wondered how the old brick masons built such perfect arches around the windows in old buildings? This picture gives a hint at the process. Wooden frames were built around the windows first, so the brick could be laid perfectly around them.

3. For Sale

I have acquired quite a bit of brick silo related material over the years, which include pictures, plans, and various drawings that are quite fascinating.

Shown below is a 20 x 30 inch collage poster showing some of these images. You can purchase it on the “shop” page of my website, www.mnbricks.com/shop

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



4. A Look Back

PRAIRIE CHICKEN HUNT NEAR ADA, MINNESOTA IN 1886 MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT

On Friday last the editor in company with I. U. White, Al. Ferris and Charlie Smith went to Ada on a chicken hunt. Although novices in the business the outfit were stayers and the party returned on Tuesday. Ike is pretty sure on a long range and can bring down a bird on the home stretch. Al. Ferris is a good all 'round customer when the covey is down and Charlie Smith can wing a chicken every time, sometimes, while for ourselves we can shoot a bird at the table in elegant shape.

Chicken shooting is a fascinating sport in itself and has the preference over every other sport, the birds being very accommodating and are hunted in pleasant weather. Daylight found our party in the grain fields to the west of Ada, the crowd being composed of fourteen hunters and paired off in couples on either side of the Wild Rice river. The objective point was the town of Halstad and the party was to meet 12 miles this side for dinner. The noon hour found all hands on deck and the dinner under the trees after a travel of twelve miles under the blazing sun was partaken of with a relish.

After dinner all hands turned out and at the word of command the dogs were in the wagon until a likely field was found. The dogs were eager for the sport to begin, not more so than our crowd though, and at the words "Hunt 'em up" and a wave of command they sprang out into the stubble at full speed, two hunters and a dog to each side of the field. The dogs work to the center cross, keep on to the other edge, return and cross again, covering the field in ever varying and irregular circles. Now and then one pauses and snuffs the wind blowing down the field or turns quickly aside from his course and follows up for a few yards an old scent in the hopes of finding it stronger.

Suddenly one of them, running at full speed in long, elastic bounds with ears and tail waving as he leaps, falls flat on his belly as if paralyzed and remains motionless as stone. Quick as is his movements, the other dog has also crouched and is pointing at the first dog, backing him up with implicit confidence. The sagacious animals turn their heads and look back at their masters with intelligent eyes, as if to say "Hurry up, here they are!" The hunters move rapidly up to the first dog, who has not moved a muscle except to turn his head and look back, raises slowly to his feet and with nose extended steals slowly forward; his feet are lifted and put down like paws of velvet.

Continued on the next page...



Prairie Chickens

- Almost Hunted to Extinction
- Statue (above) at Rothsay, MN



The hunter follows carefully behind with guns ready for use. Down goes the dog as though shot dead and this time he does not dare look back, the tremor of his body giving warning that he dare go no farther without walking into the covey. We take one, two steps – whiz, whirr, three birds arise – two to the left and one to the right. Bang, bang, bang; two birds have fallen. Neither dog nor hunters stir a step, while a fourth chicken arises and at the discharge of a gun the chickens arise on all sides and the noise from the breech-loaders would indicate to a man up a tree that a detachment of artillery had been turned loose.

To a novice, as the writer, the sport is wildly exciting. The intelligent and admirable workings of the dogs, the intense excitement of moment when the birds are rising with the noise and speed of a rocket from beneath our very feet and the exhilaration of a successful shot gives it a fascination hard to describe to those who have not tried it. A man may be a good shot at other kinds of birds but he is very apt to miss his first half-dozen chickens – we found it so and can prove the assertion if it is doubted. They rise too near you and are apt to look so large that you think if you only shoot it is not possible to miss, and a shot without proper aim will be the result.

We were just getting into the sport when a hard shower came up and we were obliged to drive 12 miles in a blinding rain in order to get accommodations for the party over night. But when we got there, drenched to the skin, and the greater part of the night was spent in pinning bed bugs to the wall. Al. Ferris after considerable practice getting so expert that he could lay on his back and whirl his cleaver through the air and hit a bug in the middle every time. The next day was very favorable and on arriving at Ada in the tally showed that the party had bagged 150 birds. If you want to go where the people treat you well, we recommend you to go to Ada in chicken time. (*The Brainerd Dispatch*, Friday, August 20, 1886, Page 4)

5. News Nuggets

Our fellow townsmen, Messrs. Keating & Hallett, have shipped a car load of beautiful evergreen Christmas trees – to Chicago, and also some twenty sacks of running pine and prince's feather, with which to make wreaths and other ornaments. The car contained a thousand trees, which will unquestionably be the finest Christmas trees ever introduced into Chicago, and the enterprising firm will doubtless realize handsomely on their venture. Mr. Keating accompanied the trees, and will retail them out. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, November 28, 1874, Page 1)

Venison is so plenty in this town now that one can scarcely get along the streets without stumbling over the carcasses. Not less than two hundred deer have been killed in this immediate vicinity within the past month, besides some bear. The venison this season is of the very finest quality, savory, of a delicious flavor, and is extraordinarily fat. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, November 28, 1874, Page 1)

As Mr. Jackson, of this place, was pulling a bass out of the River on Monday morning, a large pickerel appeared near the surface and endeavored to get this prize away from him. Mr. J. quickly caught the meddler by the gills and hauled him out of the water. He was a monster in size, and weighed 26 pounds. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, October 10, 1874, Page 1)

A party of gentlemen – our old friend Kenyon among them – were sporting at Square Lake a few days since and took two enormous pickerel – one of them weighing thirty and another twenty-six pounds. That might properly be termed a scaly operation. They were no sardines. These monsters were served up at the Sawyer House yesterday. (The Stillwater Messenger, Wednesday, May 1, 1867, Page 1)

Very many complaints are made of late against breachy cattle which ransack the city during the night time, tearing down fences, ravaging gardens, destroying shade trees and doing all sorts of damage. One old cow with a large bell entertains particular antipathy towards our garden, fences, etc., and has destroyed ten or fifteen dollars worth of property, besides littering our yard with filth. Make the fence as strong as we may she will tear it down every night, and we give notice that we propose to take out our damages in beef ere long if she is not taken care of. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, September 6, 1879, Page 4)

The fire-cracker season is upon us again – the most abominable of the year. The side-walks have been set on fire several times by them already during the past week, and a wide-spread conflagration will be the finale, if precautionary measures are not adopted. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, June 14, 1879, Page 4)

Continued Next Page

**News Nuggets
from the late 1800s**

The large quantities of rubbish lying about in many back yards and in some alleys has undoubtedly caused more sickness here this spring, than whiskey and tobacco combined; and as the weather is now warming up a little the time is opportune to compel occupants of lots to clean up their premises or pay to have it done. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, June 7, 1879, Page 4)

Prof. (Jos.) Hill has been engaged in immortalizing Brainerd, in the highest style of art. He has some twenty different views of our streets, and a number of private residences. Our folk will do well to step into Mr. Hills gallery and get a few of these views – to remember Brainerd with – to send to their friends. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, November 1, 1879, Page 4)

Huckleberries. Will soon be ripe, and we wager that Crow Wing County will produce this year ten thousand bushels of this delicious and valuable fruit. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, June 29, 1872, Page 1)

Our slumbers were made pleasant a few nights since by that old familiar sound, the howl of a wolf, down in the beautiful groves just below town. It reminded us of our boyhood times in Minnesota, during the early territorial days, when we used to be an inhabitant of the Big Woods on the Minnesota river. M. C. Russell. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, March 16, 1872, Page 3)

All day last Sunday our streets were made lively by about fifty or sixty Chippewas, in their war paint and breech-clouts, engaged in a regular series of dances, and pow-wows generally. Of course there were two or three – probably five – hundred spectators to the scene, and the series of dances were kept going a good share of the day. Their music consisted of a tom-tom, or Indian drum, which was beat, tump, tump, to the time of the dancing. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, September 28, 1872, Page 1)

A car was lately shipped directly through from Brainerd to Boston, loaded with 12,000 pounds of venison, one ton of turkeys, 2,000 pheasants, 4,000 pounds of butter and two carcasses of youthful bear. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, January 18, 1873, Page 1)

Our streets are overrun with swine. ...A little thinning out in this line would be a good thing. (Brainerd Tribune, Saturday, March 1, 1873, Page 1)



6. Brick Structure of the Month



ST. PAUL UNION DEPOT

To accommodate an increasing number of railroads entering St. Paul, Minnesota, a union depot was completed in 1881. The exterior brick was not made in Minnesota, rather it was pressed brick from St. Louis, Missouri.



This morning, or rather last evening, inaugurated a new era in the arrival and departure of railroad trains from St. Paul. Ever since the first train of cars arrived and departed from this city there has been more or less inconvenience by both the railroad companies and passengers, in the matter of depot accommodations. The depots have been located at different points, and without exception have been totally inadequate for the accommodation of the great traveling public. Thousands upon thousands of passengers arrive and depart daily from this city, and the formal opening of the Union depot, which will practically take place this morning, will do away with much of the inconvenience experienced for the past few years. (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, Monday, August 22, 1881, Page 4)

For more information, see: www.mnbricks.com/saint-paul-union-depot